A N

Humble Attempt

To promote

Explicit Agreement

A N D

Viſible UNION

Of God's People in

Extraordinary Prayer

For the Revival of *Religion* and the Advancement of *Chriſt's Kingdom* on Earth, purſuant to Scripture-Promiſes and Prophecies concerning the *laſt Time*.

By *Jonathan Edwards*, A. M.
Miniſter of the Goſpel at *Northampton*.

With a Preface by ſeveral Miniſters.

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An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union for the Revival of Religion of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer

by Jonathan Edwards, A.M.

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Study Edition

Edited by Philip T. Russell

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S.D.G.

Study Edition Editor's Notes

Jonathan Edwards' writings are quite extensive, reflecting his deep and prolific engagement with theological, philosophical, and pastoral matters. His collected works span multiple volumes, encompassing sermons, treatises, philosophical writings, personal letters, and theological notes. However, he did not write Bible commentaries or any systematic theology in the modern sense.

The present work, *An Humble Attempt…* is recommended as Reverend Edwards' best systematic treatment of eschatology. His view of end times was characterized by a strong belief in the progress of God's kingdom on earth, which aligns with postmillennial thinking. However, his views also incorporated unique elements, such as a belief in a significant revival or work of God's Spirit preceding the millennium, which would bring about a major transformation in society and the church.

An astute theologian of Edwards' time would recognize these nuances and might describe his eschatology as a form of "optimistic postmillennialism" with a particular emphasis on revival and the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. This perspective would be contextualized within the broader framework of Reformed theology and the Puritan heritage, which greatly influenced Edwards' thinking.

This *Study Edition* is an attempt to make Rev. Edwards' eschatology more accessible to the modern student. Although his part and section headings offer some navigational guidance, the paragraphs they contain can be denser and longer than modern readers might typically expect. Within his text, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between his own writing and the biblical quotations. This is a manifestation of his deeply biblical thought and expression. Edwards speaks to us in a language which is much more than erudite English: it is profoundly biblical English.

To aid navigation and study, the text has been edited and formatted as follows:

- At the beginning of every section, and within some sections, I have added a precis or headpiece that enumerates the section's main points. These are shown in shaded boxes with sans-serif type. These are my own additions, not part of the original text.
- Most Bible quotations are placed on separate lines and indented, with the reference given in bold type at the beginning.
- In the original text some of Rev. Edwards' Bible quotations were concatenated, despite being from distant verses or even books. These have been separated.
- For Bible passages that are referenced but not quoted, the references appear in bold type.

- For inline Bible quotations, references are now consistently placed at the end and enclosed in parentheses. In the original, placement was inconsistent.
- In a few cases where Bible passages were not quoted in the original, and the context seems to call for the full quotations, they have been added. These are shown in shaded boxes with sans-serif type, and are my own additions, not part of the original text.
- Rev. Edwards' quotations primarily use the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible. Quotations I have added also use this version.
- Sometimes in the original text Rev. Edwards has loosely quoted or paraphrased Bible passages. In these cases, where the quotation is close to the biblical text, quotation marks have been retained and any missing references added. Where his words are more like paraphrases, quotation marks have been removed, but references retained or added.
- Within some Bible quotations, where Edwards inserted or appended words, I have enclosed these words in square brackets.
- Some Bible references that were incorrect in the original have been corrected or removed.
- In a few cases, I have added references not found in the original.
- Bible book abbreviations used in the original have been expanded to the full names of the books, except that “Song of Solomon” is abbreviated as “Song.”
- Almost all the original spellings, which align more closely to British English of the period, have been retained. Some archaic separate words have been concatenated; for example “any where” has been changed to “anywhere” and so forth. This is done for readability.
- The text is set in the Garamond typeface, a serif font that retains the feel of books from this period. Headpieces, added quotations, and these notes are set in the more modern Franklin Gothic typeface to make it clear the text are this editor’s additions.
- Vertical line spacing is greater than the original for readability and to leave room for the student’s own annotations.
- Headpieces and portions of these Editor’s Notes were written with assistance from the ChatGPT 4.0 large language model.

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ADVERTISEMENT

THE following is the original title more at large, which the editors are disposed to preserve, as it contains a more particular exhibition of the nature and design of the work. How suitable the work itself is, in reference to the present state of things, we leave to the reader's own reflection.

"An HUMBLE ATTEMPT to promote an explicit agreement and visible union of God's people through the world, in extraordinary PRAYER, for the REVIVAL of religion, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth, pursuant to scripture promises and prophecies concerning the last time,

OCCASIONED

By a late MEMORIAL published by a number of ministers in Scotland, and sent over to America; giving an account of a certain CONCERT for prayer—which has already been come into by many ministers and others in Great Britain and some other parts, and in which they desire the general concurrence of their Christian brethren everywhere.

CONTAINING

A copy of the said memorial with a more particular view of the affair it relates to; a variety of arguments and persuasives to comply with the motion therein made, for united and extraordinary prayer; and answers to some objections.

TOGETHER WITH

Seasonable considerations on the aspects of providence in many late wonderful dispensations, and the present state of things in the church and moral world; pointing out the fulfilling of the Scriptures, and the voice of God to his people, in these events."

PREFACE BY A FORMER ENGLISH EDITOR

IF any inquire why the ensuing work is re-published, I would beg leave to lay before them the following intelligence.

At an association of the ministers and messengers of the Baptist Churches in the counties of Northampton, Leicester, &c. held at Nottingham, in the year 1784, a resolution was formed to establish through the association, a meeting of prayer for the general revival and spread of religion. This was to be observed the first Monday evening in every calendar month, by all the churches. It still continues: In 1786, another Baptist association commonly called the Midland, held that year at Aulcester, in the county of Warwick, entered into the same resolution. Many other churches, particularly in Yorkshire, have adopted, and now follow, the above practice. We have the pleasure also to find, that several Pædobaptist churches statedly meet on those evenings for the same purpose.

The re-publication of the following work is with the avowed design of promoting the above agreement and practice. Those concerned in its first institution, never intended it should be confined to any peculiar connexion, or particular denomination. Rather they ardently wished it might become general among the real friends of truth and holiness. The advocates of error are indefatigable in their endeavours to overthrow the distinguishing and interesting doctrines of Christianity; those doctrines which are the grounds of our hope, and sources of our joy. Surely it becomes the followers of Christ, to use every effort, in order to strengthen the things which remain.

By re-publishing the following work, I do not consider myself as becoming answerable for every sentiment it contains. An author and an editor are very distinct characters. Should any entertain different views respecting some of the prophecies in

the inspired page, from those that are here advanced, yet such may, and I hope will, approve of the general design.

In the present imperfect state, we may reasonably expect a diversity of sentiments upon religious matters. Each ought to think for himself; and everyone has a right, on proper occasions, to show his opinion. Yet all should remember that there are but two parties in the world, each engaged in opposite causes; the cause of God and of Satan; of holiness and sin; of heaven and hell. The advancement of the one, and the downfall of the other, must appear exceedingly desirable to every real friend of God and man. If such in some respects entertain different sentiments, and practise distinguishing modes of worship, surely they may unite in the above business. O for thousands upon thousands, divided into small bands in their respective cities, towns, villages, and neighbourhood, all met at the same time, and in pursuit of one end, offering up their united prayers, like so many ascending clouds of incense before the Most High! May he shower down blessings on all the scattered tribes of Zion! Grace, great grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity! Amen!

JOHN SUTCLIFF.

Olney, May 4th, 1789.

PREFACE BY THE AMERICAN EDITORS

THE ruin of Satan's miserable kingdom, and the advancement of the universal and happy reign of Christ on the earth, were included, and hinted at, in the sentence denounced on the serpent, that the seed of the woman should bruise his head. What was a terrible threatening to Satan, in the surprised ears of our first guilty parents, implied a joyful prophecy, to keep them from despair, and enliven their hopes, for themselves and their descendants, of obtaining by this seed of hers an eternal triumph over him who had so sadly foiled them. And it is likely, that their hope and faith immediately arose, laid hold on the reviving prophecy, earnestly desired its happy accomplishment, and transmitted it to their posterity.

But though this prophecy was at first only delivered in the form of a threatening to Satan, it was afterwards directly given in the form of a promise to Abraham, though still in general terms, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Yet this general promise was more clearly by degrees explained in the following ages, to mean a DIVINE KING, no other than the SON OF GOD assuming human nature of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David; that should be born of a virgin in Bethlehem of Judah; and at first despised, abused, rejected, and put to death; but should rise to immortal life, ascend to heaven, and thence extend his blessed kingdom over all nations; not by outward force, but inward overcoming influence, by his word and Spirit making them his willing people in the day of his power; and reigning in glorious light and holiness, love and peace, for ever: and the advancement of this universal and happy reign has been the earnest desire and prayer of the saints in all ages to the present day.

But how great the honour, and how lively the encouragement, given in Scripture to those their prayers, by representing them as offered by CHRIST himself with the fragrant incense of his own merits and intercession, on the golden altar before the

throne, and ascending together in one grateful perfume to GOD! And how cheering to every saint is that promise, from the rising of the sun, even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place, incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure, offering! How pleasing to GOD and all the heavenly hosts to see, as the sun goes round the globe, this grateful incense rising from every part on high! and the more extensive and incessant are these prayers, ascending from the circle of the earth, the more does this blessed promise go into its desired fulfilment, and the holy GOD is more pleased and glorified. To promote the increase and constancy of these acceptable prayers, is the great intention both of the pious memorial of our reverend and dear brethren, in Scotland, and of the worthy author of this exciting essay. And this design we cannot but recommend to all who desire the coming of this blissful kingdom in its promised extent and glory, in this wretched world.

As to the author's ingenious observation on the prophecies, we entirely leave them to the reader's judgment; with only observing, though it is the apprehension of many learned men, that there is to be a very general slaughter of the witnesses of CHRIST, when about finishing their testimony to the pure worship and truths of the gospel, about three or four years before the seventh angel sounds his trumpet for the ruin of antichrist;—yet we cannot see that this is any just objection against our joint and earnest prayers for the glorious age succeeding, or for the hastening of it.

For if such a terrible time is coming in Europe, which we in depending America are likely to share in; the more need we have of joining in earnest and constant prayers for extraordinary suffering graces for ourselves and others. And that such a time is coming on the members of CHRIST, is no more an objection against their prayers for the hastening of the following glory, than it was before the incarnation of him their head, that his most bitter sufferings were to precede the spreading of this joyous

kingdom among nations. And the nearer the day approaches, the more need we have to be awakened to continual watchfulness and prayer.

May GOD pour out on all his people abundantly the Spirit of grace and supplications and prepare them for the amazing changes hastening on the earth, both for previous trials and for following glories!

Boston, New England, January 12th, 1748.

AN HUMBLE ATTEMPT, &c.

Zechariah 8:20-22 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

PART I

THE TEXT OPENED, AND AN ACCOUNT GIVEN OF THE AFFAIR PROPOSED IN THE MEMORIAL FROM SCOTLAND

SECT. I

Explanatory Introduction

Zecheriah's prophecy of a future, glorious advancement of God's church • The significant inclusion of Gentile nations • The prophecy's alignment with other biblical prophecies • The special participation of the Jewish nation • Immediate blessings following Babylonian captivity • Future blessings that follow the church's deliverance from spiritual Babylon

IN this chapter we have a prophecy of a future glorious advancement of the church of God; wherein it is evident, that something further is intended than ever was fulfilled to the Jewish nation under the Old Testament. For here are plain prophecies of such things as never were fulfilled before the coming of the Messiah: particularly, what is said in the two last verses in the chapter, of many people and strong nations worshipping and seeking the true God; and of so great an accession of Gentile nations to the church of God, that by far the greater part of the visible worshippers should consist of this new accession, so that they should be to the other as ten to one.

A certain number for an uncertain. There never happened anything, from the time of the prophet Zechariah to the coming of Christ, to answer this prophecy: and it can have no fulfilment, but either, in the calling of the Gentiles, in and after the days of the apostles; or, in the future glorious enlargement of the church of God in the latter ages of the world, so often foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, and by the prophet Zechariah in particular, in the latter part of his prophecy. It is most probable, that what the Spirit of God has chiefly respect to, is that last and greatest enlargement and most glorious advancement of the church of God on earth; in the benefits of which especially the Jewish nation were to have a share, a very eminent and distinguished share.

There is a great agreement between what is here said, and other prophecies that must manifestly have respect to the church's latter-day glory: As

> **Isaiah 60:2-4** The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee: and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee.

That whole chapter, beyond all dispute, has respect to the most glorious state of the church of God on earth. So

> **Isaiah 66:8** Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once?
> **Isaiah 66:10** Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her.
> **Isa 66:12** I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.
> **Micah 4:1, &c**. But in the last day it shall come to pass, that the mountain of

> the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it; and many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

See also **Isaiah 2**. at the beginning. There has been nothing yet brought to pass, in any measure, to answer these prophecies. And as the prophecy in my text, and the following verse, agrees with them, so there is reason to think it has a respect to the same times. And indeed, there is a remarkable agreement in the description given throughout the chapter, with the representations made of those times elsewhere in the prophets.

So that however the prophet, in some parts of this chapter, may have respect to future smiles of heaven on the Jewish nation, lately returned from the Babylonish captivity, and resettled in the land of Canaan, in a great increase of their numbers and wealth, and the return of more captives from Chaldea and other countries, &c. yet the Spirit of God has doubtless respect to things far greater than these, and of which these were but faint resemblances. We find it common in the prophecies of the Old Testament, that when the prophets are speaking of divine favours and blessings on the Jews, attending or following their return from the Babylonish captivity, the Spirit of God takes occasion from thence to speak of the incomparably greater blessings on the church, that shall attend and follow her deliverance from the spiritual or mystical Babylon, of which those were a type; and then speaks almost wholly of these latter and vastly greater things, so as to seem to forget the former.

And whereas the prophet, in this chapter, speaks of God bringing his people again from the east and west to Jerusalem, (**v. 7, 8**.) and multitudes of all nations taking hold of the skirts of the Jews; so far as this means literally that nation of the posterity of Jacob, it cannot chiefly respect any return of the Jews from Babylon and other countries, in those ancient times before Christ; for no such things attended any such return. It must therefore have respect to the great calling and gathering of the Jews into the fold of Christ, and their being received to the blessings of his kingdom, after the fall of antichrist, or the destruction of mystical Babylon.

SECT. II

Observations on the text

The future advancement of the church of God • The duty of prayer • The good that shall be sought by prayer; which is God himself • Who they are that shall be united • The mode of their union • The manner of prayer agreed on

IN the text we have an account how this future glorious advancement of the church of God should be introduced; viz. By great multitudes in different towns and countries taking up a joint resolution, and coming into an express and visible agreement, that they will, by united and extraordinary prayer, seek to God, that he would come and manifest himself, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence. Particularly we may observe,

1. The duty, with the attendance on which the glorious event foretold shall be brought on; viz. **The duty of prayer**. Prayer, some suppose, is here to be taken synechdochically, for the whole of divine worship; prayer being a principal part of worship in the days of the gospel, when sacrifices are abolished. If so, this is to be understood only as a prophecy of a great revival of religion, and of the true worship of God among his visible people, the accession of others to the church, and turning of multitudes from idolatry to the worship of the true God. But it appears to me

reasonable to suppose that something more special is intended, with regard to the duty of prayer; considering that prayer is here expressly and repeatedly mentioned; and also considering how parallel this place is with many other prophecies, that speak of an extraordinary spirit of prayer, as preceding and introducing that glorious day of religious revival, and advancement of the church's peace and prosperity, so often foretold. Add to this, the agreeableness of what is here said, with what is said afterwards by the same prophet, of the pouring, out of a spirit of grace and supplication, as that with which this great revival of religion shall begin. (**Zechariah 12:10**.)

2. The good that shall be sought by prayer; which is God himself. It is said once and again, "They shall go to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts." This is the good they ask for, and seek by prayer, The Lord of hosts himself. To seek God, as the expression may perhaps be sometimes used in Scripture, may signify no more than seeking the favour or mercy of God. And if it be taken so here, praying before the Lord, and seeking the Lord of hosts, must be synonymous expressions. And it must be confessed to be a common thing in Scripture, to signify the same thing repeatedly, by various expressions of the same import, for the greater emphasis.

But certainly, that expression of seeking the Lord, is very commonly used to signify something more; it implies that God himself is the great good desired and sought after; that the blessings pursued are God's gracious presence, the blessed manifestations of him, union and intercourse with him; or, in short, God's manifestations and communications of himself by his Holy Spirit. Thus the psalmist desired God, thirsted after him, and sought him.

> **Psalm 63:1-2, 8** O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee. My flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. My soul followeth hard

after thee.

Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

The psalmist earnestly pursued after GOD, his soul thirsted after him, he stretched forth his hands unto him, &c. (**Psalm 143:6**). And therefore it is in Scripture the peculiar character of the saints, that they are those who seek GOD.

Psalm 24:6 This is the generation of them that seek him.

Psalm 69:32 Your heart shall live that seek God.

If the expression in the text be understood agreeably to this sense, then by seeking the Lord of hosts, we must understand a seeking, that God who had withdrawn, or as it were hid himself for a long time, would return to his church, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence, and those blessed communications of his Spirit to his people, and to mankind on earth, which he had often promised, and which his church had long waited for.

And it seems reasonable to understand the phrase, seeking the Lord of hosts, in this sense here; and not as merely signifying the same thing with praying to God: not only because the expression is repeatedly added to praying before the Lord, in the text; but also, because the phrase, taken in this sense, is exactly agreeable to other parallel prophetic representations. Thus God's people seeking, by earnest prayer, the promised restoration of the church of God, after the Babylonish captivity, and the great apostacy that occasioned it, is called their SEEKING GOD, and SEARCHING for him; and God's granting this promised revival and restoration is called his being FOUND of them.

Jeremiah 29:10, 14 For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards

you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye go and call upon me, and I will hearken unto you; and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart; and I will be found of you, saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity."

And the prophets, from time to time, represent God, in a low and afflicted state of his church, as being withdrawn, and hiding himself.

Isaiah 45:15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.
Isaiah 57:17 I hid me, and was wroth.

And they represent God's people, while his church is in such a state, before God delivers and restores the same, as seeking him, looking for him, searching and waiting for him, and calling after him.

Hosea 5:15. I will go and return unto my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

And when God, in answer to their prayers and succeeding their endeavours, delivers, restores, and advances his church, according to his promise, then he is said to answer, and come, and say, Here am I, and to show himself; and they are said to find him, and see him plainly.

Isaiah 58:9 Then shalt thou cry, and he shall say, Here I am.
Isaiah 45:19 I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.
Isaiah 25:8-9 The Lord will wipe away the tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off the earth. And it shall be said

> in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: This is the Lord, we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.

Together with the next chapter,

> **Isaiah 25:8-9** O Lord, we have waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early. For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.
>
> **Isaiah 52:6-8** Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know in that day, that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

3. We may observe **who they are, that shall be united** in thus seeking the Lord of hosts: the inhabitants of many cities, and of many countries, yea, many people, and strong nations, great multitudes in different parts of the world shall conspire in this business. From the representation made in the prophecy, it appears rational to suppose, that it will be fulfilled something after this manner:—There shall be given much of a spirit of prayer to God's people, in many places, disposing them to come into an express agreement, unitedly to pray to God in an extraordinary manner, that he would appear for the help of his church, and in mercy to mankind, and pour out his Spirit, revive his work, and advance his spiritual kingdom in the world, as he has promised. This disposition to prayer, and union in it, will gradually spread more and

more, and increase to greater degrees; with which at length will gradually be introduced a revival of religion, and a disposition to greater engagedness in the worship and service of God, amongst his professing people. This being observed, will be the means of awakening others, making them sensible of the wants of their souls, and exciting in them a great concern for their spiritual and everlasting good, and putting them upon earnestly crying to God for spiritual mercies, and disposing them to join in that extraordinary seeking and serving of God.

In this manner religion shall be propagated, till the awakening reaches those that are in the highest stations, and till whole nations be awakened, and there be at length an accession of many of the chief nations of the world to the church of God. Thus after the inhabitants of many cities of Israel, or of God's professing people, have taken up and pursued a joint resolution, to go and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts, others shall be drawn to worship and serve him with them; till at length many people and strong nations shall join themselves to them; and there shall, in process of time, be a vast accession to the church, so that it shall be ten times as large as it was before; yea, at length, all nations shall be converted unto God. Thus

> **Zechariah 8:23** ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, of the skirt of him that is a Jew,

in the sense of the apostle, **Romans 2:28-29**,

> **Romans 2:28-29** For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

> **Zechariah 8:23** saying, We will go with you; for we have heard, that God is with you.

And thus shall be fulfilled,

> **Psalm 65:2** O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

4. We may observe, **the mode of their union** in this duty. It is a visible union, an union by explicit agreement, a joint resolution declared by one to another, being first proposed by some, and readily and expressly followed by others. The inhabitants of one city shall apply themselves to the inhabitants of another, saying, Let us go, &c. (**Isaiah 2:3**). Those to whom the motion is made, shall comply with it, the proposal shall take with many, it shall be a prevailing, spreading thing; one shall follow another's example, one and another shall say, I will go also. Some suppose that those words, I will go also, are to be taken as the words of him that makes the proposal; as much as to say, I do not propose that to you, which I am not willing to do myself. I desire you to go and am ready to go with you. But this is to suppose no more to be expressed in these latter words, than was expressed before in the proposal itself; for these words, let us go, signify as much. It seems to me much more natural, to understand these latter words as importing the consent of those to whom the proposal is made, or the reply of one and another that falls in with it. This is much more agreeable to the plain design of the text, which is to represent the concurrence of great numbers in this affair; and more agreeable to the representation made in the next verse, of one following another, many taking hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew.

And though, if the words be thus understood, we must suppose an ellipsis in the text, something understood that is not expressed, as if it had been said, those of other cities shall say, I will go also; yet this is not difficult to be supposed, for such ellipses are very common in Scripture. We have one exactly parallel with it in

> **Jeremiah 3:22** Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God,

i.e., the backsliding children shall say, "Behold, we come unto thee," &c. And in

> **Song 4:16**. and **5:1** Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse,

i.e., her beloved shall say, "I am come into my garden." We have the like throughout that song. So

> **Psalm 50:6-7** The heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is Judge himself. Hear, O my people, and I will speak,

i.e., the Judge shall say, "Hear, O my people," &c. So **Psalm 82:1.**

> **Psalm 82:1** God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

The psalms and prophets abound with such figures of speech.

5. We may observe **the manner of prayer** agreed on, or the manner in which they agree, to engage in and perform the duty. "Let us go SPEEDILY to pray;" or as it is in the margin, "Let us go continually." The words literally translated are, "Let us go in going." Such an ingemination, or doubling of words, is very common in the Hebrew language, when it is intended that a thing shall be very strongly expressed. It generally implies the superlative degree of a thing; as the holy of holies signifies the most holy. But it commonly denotes, not only the utmost degree of a thing, but also the utmost certainty; as when God said to Abraham, "In multiplying, I will multiply thy seed," (**Gen. 22:17**) it implies both that God would certainly multiply his seed, and also multiply it exceedingly. So when God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest

thereof, in dying thou shalt die," (as the words are in the original,) it implies, both that he should surely die, and also that he should die most terribly, should utterly perish, and be destroyed to the utmost degree.

In short, as the ingemination of words in the Hebrew, generally denotes the strength of expression, so it is used to signify almost all those things that are wont to be signified by the various forms of strong speech in other languages. It signifies not only the utmost degree of a thing, and its great certainty, but also the peremptoriness and terribleness of a threatening, the greatness and positiveness of a promise, the strictness of a command, and the earnestness of a request. When God says to Adam, "Dying thou shalt die," it is equivalent to such strong expressions in English, as, Thou shalt die surely, or indeed; or, Thou shalt die with a witness. So when it is said in the text, "Let us go in going, and pray before the Lord," the strength of the expression represents the earnestness of those that make the proposal, their great engagedness in the affair. And with respect to the duty proposed, it may be understood to signify that they should be speedy, fervent, and constant in it; or, in one word, that it should be thoroughly performed.

6. We may learn from the tenor of this prophecy, together with the context, that **this union in such prayer is foretold** as a becoming and happy thing, what would be acceptable to God, **and attended with glorious success**.

From the whole we may infer, that it is a very suitable thing, and well-pleasing to God, for many people, in different parts of the world, by express agreement, to come into a visible union in extraordinary, speedy, fervent, and constant prayer, for those great effusions of the Holy Spirit, which shall bring on that advancement of Christ's church and kingdom, that God has so often promised shall be in the latter ages of the world. And so from hence I would infer the duty of God's people, with regard to the Memorial lately sent over into America from Scotland, by a number of ministers

there, proposing a method for such an union as has been spoken of, in extraordinary prayer, for this great mercy.

And it being the special design of this discourse, to persuade such as are friends to the interests of Christ's kingdom, to a compliance with the proposal and request made in that Memorial, I shall, First, give a short historical account of the affair to which it relates, from letters, papers, and pamphlets, that have come over from Scotland. Secondly, I shall annex the Memorial itself. And then, I shall offer some arguments and motives, tending to induce the friends of religion to fall in with what is proposed; and lastly, make answer to some objections that may possibly be made against it.

SECT. III

An historical account of the concert to which the Memorial relates

The Scottish ministers' October 1744 proposal • The appointed days • Beseeching the Holy Spirit's outpouring, true religious revival, and Christ's kingdom advancement • Voluntary participation • A Memorial encouraging broader participation • The initiative spreads

IN October, A.D. 1744, a number of ministers in Scotland, taking into consideration the state of God's church, and of the world of mankind, judged that the providence of God, at such a day, did loudly call upon such as were concerned for the welfare of Zion, to united extraordinary applications to the God of all grace, suitably acknowledging him as the fountain of all the spiritual benefits and blessings of his church, and earnestly praying to him, that he would appear in his glory, and favour Zion, and manifest his compassion to the world of mankind, by an abundant effusion of his Holy Spirit on all the churches, and the whole habitable earth, to revive true religion in all parts of Christendom, and to deliver all nations from their great and manifold spiritual calamities and miseries, and bless them with the unspeakable benefits of the kingdom of our glorious Redeemer, and fill the whole earth with his

glory. Consulting one another on the subject, they looked upon themselves, for their own part, obliged to engage in this duty; and, as far as in them lay, to persuade others to the same: and to endeavour to find out and fix on some method, that should most effectually tend to promote and uphold such extraordinary application to heaven among God's people.

After seeking to God by prayer for direction, they determined on the following method, as what they would conform to in their own practice, and propose to be practised by others, for the two years next following, viz. To set apart some time on Saturday evening, and sabbath morning, every week, for the purpose aforesaid, as other duties would allow to every one respectively; and more solemnly, the first Tuesday of each quarter, (beginning with the first Tuesday of November, then next ensuing,) either the whole day, or part of the day, as persons find themselves disposed, or think their circumstances will allow: the time to be spent either in private praying societies, or in public meetings, or alone in secret, as shall be found most practicable, or judged most convenient, by such as are willing, in some way or other, to join in this affair. Not that any should make promises, or be looked upon as under strict bonds in any respect, constantly and without fail to observe every one of these days, whatever their circumstances should be, or however other duties and necessary affairs might interfere; or that persons should look upon themselves bound with regard to these days in any wise as though the time were holy, or the setting of them apart for religious purposes were established by sacred authority. But yet, as a proper guard against negligence and unsteadiness, and a prudent preservative from yielding to a disposition—to which persons might be liable, through the prevalence of indolence and listlessness—to excuse themselves on trivial occasions, it was proposed, that those who united in this affair should resolve with themselves, that if, by urgent business, or otherwise, they were hindered from joining with others on the very day

agreed on, yet they would not wholly neglect bearing their part in the duty proposed, but would take the first convenient day following for that purpose.

The reason why Saturday evening and Lord's-day morning were indeed most convenient for the weekly seasons, was, that these times being so near the time of dispensing gospel ordinances through the Christian world, which are the great means, in the use of which God is wont to grant his Spirit to mankind, and the principal means that the Spirit of God makes use of to carry on his work of grace, it may be well supposed that the minds of Christians in general will at these seasons be especially disengaged from secular affairs, and disposed to pious meditations and the duties of devotion, and more naturally led to seek the communications of the Holy Spirit, and success of the means of grace. And as to the quarterly times, it was thought helpful to memory, that they should be on one or other of the first days of each quarter: Tuesday was preferred to Monday, because in some places people might have public prayers and a sermon on the stated day, which might not be so convenient on Monday, as on some day at a greater distance from the sabbath.

It was reckoned a chief use of such an agreement and method as this, that it would be a good expedient for maintaining and keeping up, amongst the people of God, the great Christian duty of prayerfulness for the coming of Christ's kingdom. Those things to which we are too little inclined, through sloth, carnality, or a fulness of our own worldly and private concerns—and which are to be attended to at some seasons or other, but have no special seasons stated for them—are apt to be forgotten, or put off from time to time, and as it were adjourned without a day. But when we fix on certain seasons, which we resolve, unless extraordinarily hindered, to devote to the duty, it tends to prevent forgetfulness, and a settled negligence of it. The certain returns of the season will naturally refresh the memory; will tend to put us in mind of the precept of Christ, and the obligations that lie on all his followers, to abound in

such a duty, and renewedly engage us to the consideration of the importance, necessity, and unspeakable value of the mercy sought; and so, by frequent renovation, to keep alive the consideration and sense of these things at all times.

Thus the first promoters of this agreement judged, that it would be subservient to more abundant prayerfulness for effusions of the Holy Spirit at all times through the year, both in secret and social worship; particularly as to this last, in congregations, families, and other praying societies. And they also judged, that such an agreed union would tend to animate and encourage God's people in the duty proposed; and that particular persons and societies, knowing that great multitudes of their fellow-Christians, in so many distant places, were at the same time (as a token of the union of their hearts with them in this affair) by agreement engaged in the same holy exercise, would naturally be enlivened in the duty by such a consideration.

It was not thought best to propose, at first, a longer time for the continuance of this precise method, than two years: it being considered, that it is not possible, before any trial, so well to judge of the expedience of a particular method, and certain circumstances of managing such an affair, as after some time of experience. And it was not known, but that after long consideration, and some trial, it might be thought best to alter some circumstances; or whether others, that had not yet been consulted, might not propose a better method. The time first agreed on, though but short, was thought sufficient to give opportunity for judgment and experience, and for such as were disposed to unite in an affair of such a nature, in distant places, mutually to communicate their sentiments on the subject.

The way which those who first projected, and came into this agreement, thought best for giving notice of it, and proposing it to others, was not by the press, but by personal conversation with such as they could conveniently have immediate access to, and by private correspondence with others at a distance. At first it was intended, that

some formal paper, proposing the matter, should be sent about for proper amendments and improvements, and then concurrence: but on more mature deliberation, it was considered how this might give a handle to objections; (which they thought it best, to the utmost, to avoid in the infancy of the affair;) and how practicable it was, without any such formality, to spread the substance of the proposal by private letters, together with a request to their correspondents mutually to communicate their thoughts. Therefore, this was fixed on, as the preferable method at the beginning. Accordingly, they proposed, and endeavoured to promote the affair, in this way; and with such success, that great numbers in Scotland and England fell in with the proposal, and some in North America. As to Scotland, it was complied with by numbers in, the four chief towns, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Dundee, and many country towns and congregations in various parts of the land. One of the ministers who was primarily concerned in this affair, in a letter to one of his correspondents, speaks of an explicit declaration of the concurrence of the praying societies in Edinburgh, which they had made in a letter. The number of the praying societies in that city is very considerable. Mr. Robe, of Kilsyth, (in a letter to Mr. Prince, of Boston, dated Nov. 3, 1743,) says, there were then above thirty societies of young people there newly erected, some of which consisted of upwards of thirty members. As to Glasgow, this union was unanimously agreed to by about forty-five praying societies there as an eminent minister in that city informs in a letter.

The two years first agreed on ended last November. A little before this time expired, a number of ministers in Scotland agreed on a Memorial to be printed, and sent abroad to their brethren in various parts, proposing to them, and requesting of them, to join in the continuance of this method of united prayer, and endeavouring to promote it. Copies of which Memorial have lately been sent over to New England, (to the number of near 500), directed to be distributed in almost every country in this province of the Massachusetts Bay, and also in several parts of Connecticut, New

Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Carolina, and Georgia. Most of these, I suppose, were sent to one of the congregational ministers in Boston, with a letter subscribed by twelve ministers in Scotland, about the affair: many of them to another of the said ministers of Boston; and some to a minister in Connecticut. It being short, I shall here insert a copy of it at length.

SECT. IV

A MEMORIAL from several ministers in Scotland, to their brethren in different places, for continuing a Concert for Prayer, first entered into in the year 1744

A coordinated effort to promote prayer • Collective participation at specific times • The initial duration • Request for feedback for potential continuation or adjustment • The initiative's flexibility and inclusivity • The importance of contributions from religious leaders • Proposed extension to seven years • Responses to the initiative

I. WHEREAS it was the chief scope of this concert to promote more abundant application to a duty that is perpetually binding, prayer that our Lord's kingdom may come, joined with praises: and it contained some circumstantial expedients, apprehended to be very subservient to that design, relating to stated times for such exercises, so for as this would not interfere with other duties; particularly a part of Saturday evening and sabbath morning, every week; and more solemnly of some one of the first days of each of the four great divisions of the year, that is, of each quarter; as the first Tuesday, or first convenient day after; and the concert, as to this circumstance, was extended only to two years; it being intended, that before these expired, persons engaged in the concert should reciprocally communicate their sentiments and inclinations, as to the prolonging of the time, with or without alteration, as to the circumstance mentioned: and it was intended by the first promoters, that others at a distance should propose such circumstantial amendments

or improvements, as they should find proper: it is hereby earnestly entreated, that such would communicate their sentiments accordingly, now that the time first proposed is near expiring.

II. To induce those already engaged to adhere, and others to accede to this concert; it seems of importance to observe, that declarations of concurrence, the communicating and spreading of which are so evidently useful, are to be understood in such a latitude, as to keep at the greatest distance from entangling men's minds: not as binding men to set apart any stated days from secular affairs, or even to fix on any part of such and such precise days, whether it be convenient or not: not as absolute promises in any respect; but as friendly, harmonious resolutions, with liberty to alter circumstances as shall be found expedient. On account of all which latitude, and that the circumstantial part extends only to a few years, it is apprehended, the concert cannot be liable to the objections against periodical religious times of human appointment.

III. It is also humbly offered to the consideration of ministers, and others furnished with gifts for the most public instructions, whether it might not be of great use, by the blessing of God, if short and nervous scriptural persuasives and directions to the duty in view, were composed and published, (either by particular authors, or several joining together; which last way might sometimes have peculiar advantages,) and that from time to time, without too great intervals; the better to keep alive on men's minds a just sense of the obligations to a duty so important in itself, and in which many may be in danger to faint and turn remiss, without such repeated incitements: and whether it would not also be of great use, if ministers would be pleased to preach frequently on the importance and necessity of prayer for the coming of our Lord's kingdom; particularly near the quarterly days, or on these days themselves, where there is public worship at that time.

IV. They who have found it incumbent on them to publish this Memorial at this time, having peculiar advantages for spreading it, do entreat that the desire of concurrence and assistance contained in it, may by no means be understood as restricted to any particular denomination or party, or to those who are of such or such opinions about any former instances of remarkable religious concern; but to be extended to all, who shall vouchsafe any attention to this paper, and have at heart the interest of vital Christianity, and the power of godliness; and who, however differing about other things, are convinced of the importance of fervent prayer, to promote that common interest, and of scripture persuasives to promote such prayer.

V. As the first printed account of this concert was not a proposal of it, as a thing then to begin, but a narration of it, as a design already set on foot, which had been brought about with much harmony, by means of private letters; so the farther continuance, and, it is hoped, the farther spreading of it, seems in a promising way of being promoted by the same means; as importunate desires of renewing the concert have been transmitted already from a very distant corner abroad, where the regard to it has of late increased: but notwithstanding what may be done by private letters, it is humbly expected, that a memorial spread in this manner, may, by God's blessing, further promote the good ends in view; as it may be usefully referred to in letters, and may reach where they will not.

VI. Whereas in a valuable letter, from the corner just now mentioned, as a place where a regard to the concert has lately increased, it is proposed, that it should be continued for seven years, or at least for a much longer time than what was specified in the first agreement; those concerned in this Memorial, who would wish rather to receive and spread directions and proposals on this head, than to be the first authors of any, apprehend no inconvenience, for their part, in agreeing to the seven years, with the latitude above described, which reserves liberty to make such circumstantial

alterations, as may be hereafter found expedient: on the contrary it seems of importance, that the labour of spreading a concert, which has already extended to so distant parts, and may, it is hoped, extend further, may not need to be renewed sooner, at least much sooner; as it is uncertain but that may endanger the dropping of it; and it seems probable, there will be less zeal in spreading it, if the time proposed for its continuance be too inconsiderable. Meantime, declarations of concurrence for a less number of years may greatly promote the good ends in view; though it seems very expedient, that it should exceed what was first agreed on; seeing it is found on trial, that that time, instead of being too long, was much too short.

VII. If any person who formerly agreed to this concert, should now discontinue it; would it not look too like that fainting in prayer, against which we are so expressly warned in Scripture? And would not this be the more unsuitable at this time, in any within the British dominions, when they have the united calls of such public chastisements and deliverances, to more concern than ever about public reformation, and consequently about that which is the source of all thorough reformation, the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Almighty Spirit of God?—August 26, 1746.

N.B. The minister in Boston aforementioned, to whom most of the copies of this Memorial were sent, who, I suppose, has had later and more full intelligence than I have had concerning the proposal, in a letter, The motions seem to come from above, and to be wonderfully spreading in Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, and in North America.

PART II

MOTIVES TO A COMPLIANCE WITH WHAT IS PROPOSED IN THE MEMORIAL

I NOW proceed to the second thing intended in this Discourse, viz. to offer to consideration some things, which may tend to induce the people of God to comply with the proposal and request, made to them in the Memorial.

SECT. I

The latter-day glory not yet accomplished

A global advancement in religion and the kingdom of Christ • An extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit of God • Fulfilment of numerous unmet prophecies • A universal adoption of true faith • The whole world given to Christ

IT is evident from the Scripture, that there is yet remaining a great advancement of the interest of religion and the kingdom of Christ in this world, by an abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God, far greater and more extensive than ever yet has been. It is certain, that many things, which are spoken concerning a glorious time of the church's enlargement and prosperity in the latter days, have never yet been fulfilled. There has never yet been any propagation and prevalence of religion, in any wise, of that extent and universality which the prophecies represent. It is often foretold and signified, in a great variety of strong expressions, that there should a time come, when all nations, throughout the whole habitable world, should embrace the true religion, and be brought into the church of God. It was often promised to the patriarchs, that "in their seed all the nations" (**Gen 22:18**), or (as it is sometimes expressed) "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (**Gen 12:3**). Agreeably to this, it is said of the Messiah,

Psalm 72:11 That all nations shall serve him; [and in]

Psalm 72: 17 Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. [And in]

Isaiah 2:2 [it is said, that] all nations shall flow unto the mountain of the house of the Lord. [And]

Jeremiah 3:17 That all nations shall be gathered unto the name of the Lord to Jerusalem and shall walk no more after the imagination of their evil heart.

Isaiah 66:23 That all flesh shall come and worship before the Lord,

Isaiah 40:5 And that all flesh should see the glory of God together,

Psalm 65:2 And that all flesh should come to him that hears prayer.

Christ compares the kingdom of heaven in this world

Matthew 13:33 to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

It is natural and reasonable to suppose that the whole world should finally be given to Christ, as one whose right it is to reign, as the proper heir of him who is originally the King of all nations, and the possessor of heaven and earth. And the Scripture teaches us, that God the Father hath constituted his Son, as God-man, in his kingdom of grace, or mediatorial kingdom, to be the heir of the world, that he might in this kingdom have

Psalm 2:8 the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for his possession.

(**Hebrews 1:2**, **Hebrews 2:8**, **Psalm 2:6-8**). Thus Abraham is said to be the heir of the world, not in himself, but in his seed, which is Christ (**Romans 4:13**). And how was this to be fulfilled to Abraham, but by God's fulfilling that great promise, that in his "seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed?" (**Genesis 22:18**) For that

promise is what the apostle is speaking of: which shows that God has appointed Christ to be the heir of the world in his kingdom of grace, and to possess and reign over all nations, through the propagation of his gospel, and the power of his Spirit communicating the blessings of it. God hath appointed him to this universal dominion by a most solemn oath;

> **Isaiah 45:23**. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.

(Compared with **Philippians 2:10-11**.) Though the solemn oath of God the Father is to be understood in so comprehensive a sense, as to extend to what shall be accomplished at the day of judgment, yet it is evident by the foregoing and following verses, that the thing most directly intended, is what shall be fulfilled by spreading the gospel of his salvation, and the power of the Spirit of grace, bringing "all the ends of the earth to look to him that they may be saved," (**Isaiah 45:22**) and come to him for "righteousness and strength…that in him they might be justified, and might glory" (**Isaiah 45:24-25**).

Christ's global dominion superior to earthly monarchies • Daniel's visions depicting the final, divine kingdom • The unparalleled, universal extent of this kingdom • A grand fulfilment of prophetic visions.

God has suffered many earthly princes to extend their conquests over a great part of the face of the earth, and to possess a dominion of vast extent, and one monarchy to conquer and succeed another, the latter being still the greater; it is reasonable to suppose, that a much greater glory in this respect should be reserved for Christ, God's own Son and rightful heir, who has purchased the dominion by so great and hard a service: it is reasonable to suppose, that his dominion should be far the largest, and

his conquests vastly the greatest and most extensive. And thus the Scriptures represent the matter, in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, and the prophet's interpretation, **Daniel 2**. There are four great monarchies of the earth, one succeeding another, are represented by the great image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay; but at last a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, smites the image upon his feet, which breaks the iron, clay, brass, silver and gold in pieces, that all become as the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carries them away, that no place is found for them; but the stone waxes great, becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth: signifying the kingdom which the Lord God of heaven should set up in the world, last of all, which should break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms. Surely this representation leads us to suppose that this last kingdom shall be of much greater extent than any of the preceding.

The like representation is made in **the 7th chapter of Daniel**; there the four monarchies are represented by four great beasts that arose successively, one conquering and subduing another; the fourth and last of these is said to be dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and to have great iron teeth, and to devour and break in pieces, and stamp the residue with his feet; yea, it is said, (**Daniel 7:23**) that the kingdom represented by this beast shall devour the whole earth: but last of all, one like the Son of man appears, coming to the Ancient of days, and being brought near before him, and receiving of him a dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. This last circumstance, of the vast extent and universality of his dominion, is manifestly spoken of as one thing greatly distinguishing this holy kingdom from all the preceding monarchies. Although of one of the former it was said, that it should devour the whole earth, yet we are naturally led, both by the much greater emphasis and strength of the expressions, as well as by the whole connexion and tenor of the prophecy, to understand the universality here expressed in a much more extensive and absolute sense. And the terms used in the

interpretation of this vision are such, that scarcely any can be devised more strong, to signify an absolute universality of dominion over the inhabitants of the face of the earth;

> **Daniel 7:27** And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the most high God.

Agreeably to this, the gospel is represented as

> **Revelation 14:6** preached unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people.

The future global spread of true religion • A literal, worldwide prevalence of the knowledge of God • The absolute universality of true religion in the latter days • The world's conversion to true faith • This view supported by many prophecies from both the Old and New Testaments • Every nation be brought into the church of Christ • God's plan fulfilled

The universal prevalence of true religion in the latter days, is sometimes expressed by its reaching to the

> **Psalm 2:8** utmost ends of the earth,
> **Psalm 22:27**, **67:7**, **98:3**, **Isaiah 45:22** To all the ends of the earth, and of the world,
> **Psalm 65:5** All the ends of the earth, with those that are far off upon the sea,
> **Psalm 113:3**, **Malachi. 1:11** From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same
> **Psalm 65:8** The outgoing of the morning and of the evening.

It seems that all the most strong expressions, that were in use among the Jews to signify the habitable world in its utmost extent, are used to signify the extent of the church of God in the latter days. And in many places, a variety of these expressions is used, and there is an accumulation of them, expressed with great force.

It would be unreasonable to say, these are only bold figures, used after the manner of the eastern nations, to express the great extent of the Christian church, at and after the days of Constantine. To say so, would be in effect to say, that it would have been impossible for God, if he had desired it, plainly to have foretold anything that should absolutely have extended to all nations of the earth. I question whether it be possible to find out a more strong expression, to signify an absolute universality of the knowledge of the true religion through the habitable world, than that in

> **Isaiah 11:9** The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Which is as much as to say, as there is no place in the vast ocean where there is not water, so there shall be no part of the world of mankind where there is not the knowledge of the Lord; as there is no part of the wide bed or cavity possessed by the sea, but what is covered with water, so there shall be no part of the habitable world that shall not be covered by the light of the gospel, and possessed by the true religion. Waters are often in prophecy put for nations and multitudes of people. So the waters of the main ocean seem sometimes to be put for the inhabitants of the earth in general; as in Ezekiel's vision of the waters of the sanctuary, (**Ezekiel 47**) which flowed from the sanctuary, and ran east, till they came to the ocean, and were at first a small stream, but continually increased till they became a great river; and when they came to the sea, the water even of the vast ocean was healed, (**Ezekiel 47:8**) representing the conversion of the world to the true religion in the latter days. It seems evident, that the time will come, when there will not be one nation remaining in

the world, which shall not embrace the true religion, in that God has expressly revealed, that no one such nation shall be left standing on the earth;

> **Isaiah 60:12** the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.

God has declared that heathen idolatry and all the worship of false gods shall be wholly abolished, in the most universal manner, so that it shall be continued in no place under the heavens, or upon the face of the earth;

> **Jeremiah 10:11** The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.
> **Jeremiah 10: 15** They are vanity, and the work of errors, in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

This must be understood as what shall be brought to pass while this earth and these heavens remain, i.e., before the end of the world. Agreeable to this is

> **Isaiah 54:1-2** Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitation: spare not, lengthen thy cords, strengthen thy stakes.
> **Isaiah 54:5** For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

The prophecies of the New Testament do no less evidently show that a time will come when the gospel shall universally prevail, and the kingdom of Christ be extended over the whole habitable earth, in the most proper sense. Christ says,

> **John 12:32** I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

It is fit, that when the Son of God becomes man, he should have dominion over all mankind. It is fit, that since he became an inhabitant of the earth, and shed his blood on the earth, he should possess the whole earth. It is fit, seeing here he became a servant, and was subject to men, and was arraigned before them, and judged, condemned, and executed by them, and suffered ignominy and death in a most public manner, before Jews and Gentiles—being lifted up to view on the cross upon a hill, near that populous city Jerusalem, at a most public time, when there were many hundred thousand spectators, from all parts—that should be rewarded with an universal dominion over mankind; and it is here declared he shall be.

The apostle, in **the 11th of Romans**, teaches us to look on that great outpouring of the Spirit, and ingathering of souls into Christ's kingdom, in those days, first of the Jews and then of the Gentiles, to be but as the first-fruits of the intended harvest, both with regard to Jews and Gentiles, as a sign that all should in due time be gathered in;

> **Romans 11:16** For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

And in that context, the apostle speaks of the FULNESS of both Jews and Gentiles, as what shall hereafter be brought in, distinctly from the ingathering from among both, in those primitive ages of Christianity. In **Romans 11:12** we read of the fulness of the Jews, and in **Romans 11:25**, of the fulness of the Gentiles. And in **Romans 11:30-32** the apostle teaches us to look upon that infidelity and darkness, which first prevailed over all Gentile nations, before Christ came, and afterwards over the Jews, as what was wisely permitted for the manifestation of the glory of God's mercy, in due time, on the whole world, constituted of Jews and Gentiles. "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (**Romans 11:32**) These things plainly show that the time is coming when the whole world of mankind shall be

brought into the church of Christ; the fulness of both, the whole lump, all the nation of the Jews, and all the world of Gentiles.

The final conflict between the church of Christ and its enemies • A period of peace and prosperity for the Church • Prophecies not yet fulfilled • Future fulfilment of these prophecies • The defeat of the Antichrist • The national conversion of Jews • Christ's kingdom established on earth • Historical tumults a preparation for the final state • The Church's hope and faith in the promise of ultimate victory and prosperity

In the last great conflict between the church of Christ and her enemies, before the commencement of the glorious time of the church's peace and rest, the kings of the earth, and the WHOLE WORLD, are represented as gathered together (**Revelation 16:14**). And then the seventh angel pours out his vial into the air, which limits the kingdom of Satan, as god of this world; and that kingdom is represented as utterly overthrown, (**Revelation 16:17, &c**). In another description of that great battle, **Revelation 16:19**, Christ is represented as riding forth, having on his head many crowns, and on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING of KINGS AND LORD of LORDS. Which we may well suppose signifies, that he is now going to that conquest, whereby he shall set up a kingdom, in which he shall be King of kings, in a far more extensive manner than either Babylonish, Persian, Grecian, or Roman monarchs were. And in **Revelation 19:17**, and following, an angel appears standing in the sun, that overlooks the whole world, calling on "all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, to come and eat the flesh of kings," &c. And in consequence of the great victory Christ gains at that time,

> **Revelation 20:1-3** an angel comes down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand, and lays hold on the devil, and binds him, and casts him into the bottomless pit, and shuts him up, and sets a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more.

Satan being dispossessed of that highest monarchy on earth, the Roman empire, and cast out in the time of Constantine is represented (**Revelation 12**) by his being cast down from heaven to the earth, but now there is something far beyond that; he is cast out of the earth, and is shut up in hell, and confined to that alone, so that he has no place left him in this world of mankind, high or low.

Now will any be so unreasonable as to say, that all these things do not signify more than that one third part of the world should be brought into the church of Christ; beyond which it cannot be pretended that the Christian religion has ever yet reached, in its greatest extent? Those countries which belonged to the Roman empire, that were brought to the profession of Christianity after the reign of Constantine, are but a small part of what the habitable world now is. As to extent of ground, they altogether bear, I suppose, no greater proportion to it, than the land of Canaan did to the Roman empire. And our Redeemer in his kingdom of grace has hitherto possessed but a little part of the world, in its most flourishing state, since arts are arisen to their greatest height; and a very great part of the world is but lately discovered, and much remains undiscovered to this day. These things make it very evident, that the main fulfilment of those prophecies, that speak of the glorious advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth, is still to come.

And as there has been nothing as yet, with regard to the flourishing of religion, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom, of such extent as to answer the prophecies, so neither has there been anything of that duration that is foretold. The prophecies speak of Jerusalem being made the

Psalm 48:2 joy of the whole earth [and also the]
Isaiah 60:15 joy of many generations. [That]
Isaiah 65:22 God's people should long enjoy the work of their hands, [That

they should]

Revelation 20:4 reign with Christ a thousand years,

by which we must at least understand a very long time. But it would be endless to mention all the places, which signify that the time of the church's great peace and prosperity should be of long continuance. Almost all the prophecies, that speak of her latter-day glory, imply it; and it is implied in very many of them, that when once this day of the church's advancement and peace is begun, it shall never end till the world ends; or, at least, that there shall be no more a return of her troubles and adversity for any considerable continuance. Then

Isaiah 60:20 the days of her mourning shall be ended; [her tribulations]

Isaiah 54:9 be as the waters of Noah unto God, that as he has sworn that the waters of Noah should no more pass over the earth, so he will swear that he will no more be wroth with [his people], or rebuke [them]. [It is implied that]

Jeremiah 3:17 God's people should no more walk after the imagination of their evil hearts;

that God would hide himself no more from the house of Israel; because he has poured out his Spirit upon them; that their

Isaiah 60:20 sun should no more go down, nor the moon withdraw itself;

that the light should not be clear and dark, (i.e. there should be no more an interchange of light and darkness, as used to be,) but that it should be all one continued day; not day and night (for so the words are in the original in **Zechariah 14:7**) alternately,

Zechariah 14:7 but it shall come to pass, that at evening time [i.e. at the time that night and darkness used to be] it shall be light; [and that]

Isaiah 2:4 the nations should beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and that nation should not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war anymore;

Psalm 72:7 but that there should be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

But the church of Christ has never yet enjoyed a state of peace and prosperity for any long time; on the contrary, the time for her rest, and of the flourishing state of religion, have ever been very short. Hitherto the church may say, as in

Isaiah 63:17-18 Return, for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance; the people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while.

The quietness that the church of God enjoyed after the beginning of Constantine's reign, was very short. The peace the empire enjoyed, in freedom from war, was not more than twenty years; no longer nor greater than it had enjoyed under some of the heathen emperors. After this the empire was rent in pieces by intestine wars and wasted almost everywhere by the invasions and incursions of barbarous nations; and the Christian world, soon after, was all in contention and confusion, by heresies and divisions in matters of religion. And the church of Christ has never as yet been, for any long time, free from persecution; especially when truth has prevailed, and true religion flourished. It is manifest, that hitherto the people of God have been kept under, and Zion has been in a low afflicted state, and her enemies have had the chief sway.

Another thing which makes it exceedingly manifest, that the day of the church's greatest advancement on earth, which is foretold in Scripture, has never yet come, is, that it is so plainly and expressly revealed, this day shall succeed the last of the four monarchies, even the Roman, in its last state, wherein it is divided into ten kingdoms,

and after the destruction of antichrist, signified by the little horn, whose reign is contemporary with the reign of the ten kings. These things are very plain in **the 2nd and 7th chapters of Daniel**, and also in **the Revelation of St. John**. And it is also plain by **the 9th chapter of Romans**, that it shall be after the national conversion of the Jews, which shall be as life from the dead to the Gentiles, and the fulness of both Jews and Gentiles shall be come in, all the nation of the Jews, and all other nations, shall obtain mercy, and there shall be that general ingathering of the harvest of the whole earth, of which all that had been converted before, either of Jews or Gentiles, were but the first-fruits.

Thus it is meet, that the last kingdom which shall take place on earth, should be the kingdom of God's own Son and heir, whose right it is to rule and reign; and that whatever revolutions and confusions there may be in the world, for a long time, the cause of truth, the righteous cause, shall finally prevail, and God's holy people should at last inherit the earth, and reign on earth; and that the world should continue in tumults and great revolutions, following one another, from age to age, the world being as it were in travail, till truth and holiness are brought forth. It is meet, that all things should be shaken, till that comes which is true and right, and agreeable to the mind of God, which cannot be shaken; and that the wisdom of the Ruler of the world should be manifested in bringing all things ultimately to so good an issue. The world is made for the Son of God; his kingdom is the end of all changes, that come to pass in the state of the world. All are only to prepare the way for this; it is fit, therefore, that the last kingdom on earth should be his. It is wisely and mercifully ordered of God, that it should be so, on this account, as well as many others, viz. That the church of God, under all preceding changes, should have this consideration to encourage her, and maintain her hope, and animate her faith and prayers, from generation to generation, that God has promised, her cause should finally be maintained and prevail in the world.

SECT. II

The latter-day glory unspeakably great

A promised future time of profound spiritual significance and joy • Extraordinary glorification of God and Jesus on earth • Increase in divine knowledge and understanding • Universal knowledge of the Lord and holiness • Society transformed • An age of unity and peace • Temporal blessings • Prayer motivated by anticipation of this divine epoch, love for God, humanity, and the world

THE future promised advancement of the kingdom of Christ is an event unspeakably happy and glorious. The Scriptures speak of it as a time wherein God and his Son Jesus Christ will be most eminently glorified on earth; a time, wherein God, who till then had dwelt between the cherubims—and concealed himself in the holy of holies, in the secret of his tabernacle, behind the veil, in the thick darkness—should openly shine forth, and all flesh should see his glory, and God's people in general have as great a privilege as the High Priest alone had once a year, or as Moses had in the mount. A time this, wherein the

> **Revelation 11:19** temple of God in heaven should be opened, and there should be seen the ark of his testament;

a time, wherein both God will be greatly glorified, and his saints made unspeakably happy in the view of his glory; a time, wherein God's people should not only once see the light of God's glory, as Moses, or see it once a year with the high priest, but should dwell and walk continually in it, and it should be their constant daily light, instead of the light of the sun; (**Isaiah 2:5**, **Psalm 89:15**, **Isaiah 60:19**) which light should be so much more glorious than the light of the sun or moon, that

> **Isaiah 24:23** the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts should reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, before his ancients gloriously.

It is represented as a time of vast increase of knowledge and understanding, especially in divine things; a time wherein God would

> **Isaiah 25:7** destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil spread over all nations; [wherein]
> **Isaiah 30:26** the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven-fold,
> **Isaiah 32:3-4** And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, … and the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge,
> **Jeremiah 31:34** And they shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, because they shall all know him from the least to the greatest.

It is declared to be a time of general holiness,

> **Isaiah 60:21** Thy people shall be all righteous.

A time of prevailing eminent holiness, when little children shall, in spiritual attainments, be as though they were a hundred years old (**Isaiah 65:20**), wherein

> **Zechariah 12:8** he that is feeble among God's people shall be as David,

A time wherein holiness should be as it were inscribed on everything, on all men's common business and employments, and the common utensils of life, all shall be dedicated to God, and improved to holy purposes (**Isaiah 23:18**). Her merchandise and hire shall be holiness to the Lord:

> **Zechariah 14:20-21** In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar; yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts.

A time shall come wherein religion and true Christianity shall in every respect be uppermost in the world; wherein God will cause his church to "arise and shake herself from the dust" (**Isaiah 52:2**), and "put on her beautiful garments" (**Isaiah52:1**), and sit down on a throne (**Revelation 3:21**);

> **I Samuel 2:8** and the poor shall be raised from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, and shall be set among princes, and made to inherit the throne of God's glory,

a time wherein vital piety shall take possession of thrones and palaces, and those that are in most exalted stations shall be eminent in holiness,

> **Isaiah 49:23** And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers
> **Isaiah 60:16** Thou shalt suck the breasts of kings.
> **Psalm 45:12** The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.

A time of wonderful union, and the most universal peace, love, and sweet harmony; wherein the nations shall "beat their swords into plow-shares," &c. (**Isaiah 2:4**, **Micah 4:3**) and God will

> **Psalm 46:9** cause wars to cease to the ends of the earth, and break the bow, and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire,
> **Psalm 72:3** and the mountains shall bring forth peace to God's people, and the little hills by righteousness [wherein]
> **Isaiah 11:6** the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, [&c.]

and wherein God's people shall

Isaiah 32:18 dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and quiet resting places;

and **Isaiah 33:20, 21**. A time shall come wherein all heresies and false doctrines shall be exploded, and the church of God shall not be rent with a variety of jarring opinions,

Zechariah 14:9 The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one.

All superstitious ways of worship shall be abolished, and all agree in worshipping God in his own appointed way, and agreeably to the purity of his institutions;

Jeremiah 32:39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and their children after them.

A time wherein the whole earth shall be united as one holy city, one heavenly family, men of all nations shall as it were dwell together, and sweetly correspond one with another, as brethren and children of the same father; as the prophecies often speak of God's people at that time as the children of God, and brethren one to another, all "appointing over them one head" (**Hosea 1:11**), gathered to one house of God, to "worship the King, the Lord of hosts" (**Zechariah 14:16**).

A time approaches wherein this whole great society shall appear in glorious beauty, in genuine amiable Christianity and excellent order, as "a city compact together, the perfection of beauty, an eternal excellency" (**Psalm 122:3**, **Psalm 50:2**, **Isaiah 60:15**), shining with a reflection of the glory of Jehovah risen upon it, which shall be attractive and ravishing to all kings and nations, and it shall appear "as a bride adorned for her husband." (**Revelation 21:2**)—A time of great temporal prosperity; of great health;

Isaiah 33:24 The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick [of long life];

Isaiah 65:22 As the days of a tree, are the days of my people.

A time wherein the earth shall be abundantly fruitful; (**Psalm 67**, **Isaiah 65:23, 24**, **Amos 9:15**, and many other places.) A time wherein the world shall be delivered from that multitude of sore calamities which before had prevailed, (**Ezekiel 47:20**) and there shall be an universal blessing of God upon mankind, in soul and body, and in all their concerns, and all manner of tokens of God's presence and favour, and

Isaiah 62:5 God shall rejoice over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, [and]

Joel 3:18 the mountains shall as it were drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk

A time of great and universal joy, we are taught to expect, will take place through all the earth, when

Isaiah 24:16 from the utmost ends of the earth shall be heard songs, even glory to the righteous, [and God's people]

Isaiah 12:3 shall with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation. [God shall]

Isaiah 25:6 prepare in his holy mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,

which feast is represented, **Revelation 19** as the marriage supper of the Lamb. Yea, the Scriptures represent it not only as a time of universal joy on earth, but extraordinary joy in heaven, among the angels and saints, the holy apostles and prophets there; (**Revelation 18:20** and **19:1-9**). Yea, the Scriptures represent it as a time of extraordinary rejoicing with Christ himself, the glorious head, in whom all things in heaven and earth shall then be gathered together in one;

> **Zephaniah 3:17** The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.

And the very fields, trees, and mountains shall then as it were rejoice, and break forth into singing:

> **Isaiah 55:12** Ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
> **Isaiah 44:23** Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himself in Israel.

Such being the state of things in this future promised glorious day of the church's prosperity, surely it is worth praying for. Nor is there any one thing whatsoever, if we viewed things aright, for which a regard to the glory of God, a concern for the kingdom and honour of our Redeemer, a love to his people, pity to perishing sinners—love to our fellow-creatures in general, compassion to mankind under their various and sore calamities and miseries, a desire of their temporal and spiritual prosperity, love to our country, our neighbours, and friends, yea, and to our own souls—would dispose us to be so much in prayer, as for the dawning of this happy day, and the accomplishment of this glorious event.

SECT. III
How much Christ prayed and laboured and suffered, in order to the glory and happiness of that day

The Holy Spirit the key benefit of Christ's redemptive work • Humanity enabled to receive the Holy Spirit by Christ's work • The Spirit central to the covenants of both

redemption and grace • The Spirt received by Christ from the Father to bestow upon the faithful • The Spirit's presence fully realized in a future time of widespread righteousness • Believers urged to earnestly seek and pray for the Holy Spirit

THE sum of the blessings Christ sought, by what he did and suffered in the work of redemption, was the Holy Spirit. Thus is the affair of our redemption constituted; the Father provides and gives the Redeemer, and the price of redemption is offered to him, and he grants the benefit purchased; the Son is the Redeemer who gives the price, and also is the price offered; and the Holy Spirit is the grand blessing obtained by the price offered and bestowed on the redeemed. The Holy Spirit, in his indwelling presence, his influences and fruits, is the sum of all grace, holiness, comfort, and joy; or, in one word, of all the spiritual good Christ purchased for men in this world: and is also the sum of all perfection, glory, and eternal joy, that he purchased for them in another world. The Holy Spirit is the subject matter of the promises, both of the eternal covenant of redemption, and also of the covenant of grace. This is the grand subject of the promises of the Old Testament, so often recorded in the prophecies of Messiah's kingdom; and the chief subject of the promises of the New Testament; and particularly of the covenant of grace delivered by Jesus Christ to his disciples, as his last will and testament, in **the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John**; the grand legacy that he bequeathed to them, in his last and dying discourse with them. Therefore the Holy Spirit is so often called the Spirit of promise, and emphatically, the promise, the promise of the Father, &c.

This being the great blessing Christ purchased by his labours and sufferings on earth, it was that which he received of the Father when he ascended into heaven and entered into the holy of holies with his own blood, that he might communicate it to those whom he had redeemed.

John 16:7 It is expedient for you, that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

Acts 2:33 Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

This is the sum of those gifts, which Christ received for men, even for the rebellious, at his ascension; and of the benefits Christ obtains for men by his intercession;

John 14:16-17 I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth.

Herein consists Christ's communicative fulness, even in his being full of the Spirit; and so full of grace and truth, that we might of this fulness receive, and grace for grace. He is anointed with the Holy Ghost, and this is the ointment that goes down from the head to the members.

John 3:34 God gives the Spirit not by measure unto him,

Ephesians 4:7 that every member might receive according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

This therefore was the great blessing he prayed for in that wonderful prayer which he uttered for his disciples and all his future church, the evening before he died, **John 17**. The blessing he prayed for to the Father, in behalf of his disciples, was the same he had insisted on in his preceding discourse with them; and this, doubtless, was the blessing he prayed for, when, as our High Priest, he offered up strong crying and tears, with his blood, **Hebrews 5:6, 7**. As for this he shed his blood, for this he also shed tears, and poured out prayers.

But of all the time we have been speaking of, this is the chief season for the bestowment of this blessing; the main season of success to all that Christ did and suffered in the work of our redemption. Before this, the Spirit of God is given but very sparingly, and but few are saved; but then it will be far otherwise; wickedness shall be rare then, as virtue and piety had been before: and undoubtedly, by far the greatest number of them that ever receive the benefits of Christ's redemption, from the beginning of the world to the end of it, will receive it in that time.

This time is represented in Scripture, as the proper appointed season of Christ's salvation, eminently the elect season, the accepted time, and day of salvation. "The year of Christ's redeemed," (**Isaiah 63:4**). This period is spoken of as the proper time of the Redeemer's dominion, and the reign of his redeeming love, in **the 2d and 7th chapters of Daniel**, and many other places; the proper time of his harvest, or ingathering of his fruits from this fallen world; the appointed day of his triumph over Satan, the great destroyer; and the appointed day of his marriage with his elect spouse, (**Revelation 19:7**). The time given to the Sun of righteousness to rule, as the day is the time God has appointed for the natural sun to bear rule. Therefore the bringing on of this time is called

> **Matthew 16:28** Christ's coming in his kingdom; [wherein he will]
> **Isaiah 64:1** rend the heavens and come down, [and]
> **Malachi 4:2** the Sun of righteousness shall arise

(and **Isaiah 60:1**). The comparatively little saving good there is in the world, as the fruit of Christ's redemption, before that time, is as it were granted by way of anticipation; as we anticipate something of the sun's light by reflection before the proper time of the sun's rule; and as the first-fruits are gathered before the harvest. Then more especially will be the fulfilment of those great promises, made by God the Father to the Son, for his pouring out his soul unto death; then

> **Isaiah 53:10** shall he see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; [then]
> **Isaiah 53:11** shall he see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, and shall justify many by his knowledge; [then]
> **Isaiah 53:12** will God divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;

then shall Christ in an eminent manner obtain his chosen spouse, that he loved and died for,

> **Ephesians 5:26-27** that he might sanctify and cleanse her, with the washing of water, by the word, and present her to himself, a glorious church.

He will obtain

> **Hebrews 12:2** the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame,

chiefly in the events and consequences of that day: that day, as was observed before, which is often represented as eminently the time of the "rejoicing of the bridegroom" (**Isaiah 62:5**). The foreknowledge and consideration of it was what supported him, and that in which his soul exulted, at a time when it had been troubled at the view of his approaching sufferings; as may be seen in **John 12:23**-**24**, **27**, **31**-**32**.

Now therefore, if this is what Jesus Christ, our great Redeemer and the head of the church, did so much desire, and set his heart upon, from all eternity, and for which he did and suffered so much, offering up strong crying and tears, and his precious blood, to obtain it; surely his disciples and members should also earnestly seek it, and be much in prayer for it.

SECT. IV

The whole creation travails in pain

An eagerly awaited future day of glory • Children of God revealed in their full splendor and freedom • The natural world restored • Every event in history seen as a step towards ultimate redemption • Final upheavals likened to the intense pains of childbirth • Humanity and the inanimate world rejoice at this culmination • Saints and angels to celebrate the final conversion of the world • Christ's union with His church consumated

THE whole creation is, as it were, earnestly waiting for that day, and constantly groaning and travailing in pain to bring forth the felicity and glory of it. For that day is above all other times, excepting the day of judgment, the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, and of their glorious liberty: and therefore, that elegant representation the apostle makes of the earnest expectation and travail of the creation, in **Romans 8:19-22** is applicable to the glorious event of this day;

> **Romans 8:19-22** the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

The visible world has now for many ages been subject to sin, and made, as it were, a servant to it, through the abuse that man, who has the dominion over the creatures, puts the creatures to. Thus the sun is a sort of servant to all manner of wickedness, as its light, and other beneficial influences, are abused by men, and made subservient to their lusts and sinful purposes. So of the rain, the fruits of the earth, the brute animals, and all other parts of the visible creation; they all serve men's corruption, and obey

their sinful will. And God doth, in a sort, subject them to it; for he continues his influence and power to make them obedient, according to the same law of nature, whereby they yield to men's command when used to good purposes.

It is by the immediate influence of God upon things according to those constant methods which we call the laws of nature, that they are ever obedient to man's will, or that we can use them at all. This influence God continues in order to make them obedient to man's will, though wicked. This is a sure sign, that the present state of things is not lasting: it is confusion; and God would not suffer it to be, but that he designs in a little time to put an end to it. Seeing it is to be but a little while, God chooses rather to subject the creature to man's wickedness, than to disturb and interrupt the course of nature according to its stated laws: but it is, as it were, a force upon the creature; for the creature is abused in it, perverted to far meaner purposes, than those for which the author of its nature made and adapted it. The creature therefore is unwillingly subject; and but for a short time; and, as it were, hopes for an alteration. It is a bondage which the creature is subject to, from which it was partly delivered when Christ came, and when the gospel was promulgated in the world; and will be more fully delivered at the commencement of the glorious day we are speaking of, and perfectly at the day of judgment. This agrees with the context; for the apostle was speaking of the present suffering state of the church. The reason why the church in this world is in a suffering state, is, that the world is subject to the sin and corruption of mankind. By vanity and corruption in Scripture, is very commonly meant sin, or wickedness; as might be shown in very many places, would my intended brevity allow.

Though the creature is thus subject to vanity, yet does not it rest in this subjection, but is constantly acting and exerting itself, in order to that glorious liberty that God has appointed at the time we are speaking of, and, as it were, reaching forth towards

it. All the changes brought to pass in the world, from age to age, are ordered by infinite wisdom, in one respect or other to prepare the way for that glorious issue of things, when truth and righteousness shall finally prevail, and he, whose right it is, shall take the kingdom. All the creatures, in all their operations and motions, continually tend to this. As in a clock, all the motions of the whole system of wheels and movements, tend to the striking of the hammer at the appointed time. All the revolutions and restless motions of the sun and other heavenly bodies, from day to day, from year to year, and from age to age, are continually tending thither; as all the many turnings of the wheels of a chariot, in a journey, tend to the appointed journey's end. The mighty struggles and conflicts of nations, those vast successive changes which are brought to pass in the kingdoms and empires of the world, from one age to another, are, as it were, travail-pangs of the creation, in order to bring forth this glorious event. And the Scriptures represent the last struggles and changes that shall immediately precede this event, as being the greatest of all, as the last pangs of a woman in travail are the most violent.

The creature thus earnestly expecting this glorious manifestation and liberty of the children of God, and travailing in pain in order to it, the Scriptures, by a like figure, very often show, that when this shall be accomplished, the whole inanimate creation shall greatly rejoice:

> **Psalm 96:11** That the heavens shall sing, the earth be glad,
> **Isaiah 55:12** the mountains break forth into singing,
> **Psalm 98:8** the hills be joyful together,
> **Psalm 96:12** the trees clap their hands,
> **Psalm 96:11**(?) the lower parts of the earth shout,
> **Psalm 98:7-8** the sea roar and the fulness thereof…and the floods clap their hands.

All the intelligent elect creation, all God's holy creatures in heaven and earth, are truly and properly waiting for, and earnestly expecting, that event. It is abundantly represented in Scripture as the spirit and character of all true saints, that they set their hearts upon, love, long, wait, and pray for the promised glory of that day; they are spoken of as those that

> **Psalm 137:6** prefer Jerusalem to their chief joy, [that]
> **Psalm 102:13-14** That take pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favour the dust thereof, [that]
> **Luke 2:25, 38** That wait for the consolation of Israel.

It is the language of the church of God, and the breathing of every true saint,

> **Psalm 14:7** O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad. [And]
> **Song 2:17** Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. [And]
> **Song 8:14** Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

Agreeable to this was the spirit of old Jacob, which he expressed when he was dying, exercising faith in the great promise made to him, and Isaac, and Abraham, that

> **Genesis 22:18** in [their] thy seed all the families of the earth should be blessed,
> **Genesis 49:18** I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.

The same is represented as the spirit of his true children, or the family of Jacob,

Isaiah 8:17 I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth himself from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

2 Timothy 4:8 They that love Christ's appearing,

is a name that the apostle gives to true Christians.

The glorious inhabitants of the heavenly world—the saints and angels there, who rejoice when one sinner repents—are earnestly waiting, in an assured and joyful dependence on God's promises of that conversion of the world and marriage of the Lamb, which shall take place when that glorious day comes: and therefore they are represented as all with one accord rejoicing, and praising God with such mighty exultation and triumph, when it is accomplished, **Revelation 19**.

SECT. V

Precepts, encouragements, and examples

Christians encouraged to pray fervently for the Holy Spirit • The Spirit's indwelling presence seen as central to the Christian life and the pinnacle of blessings • Such prayer guided and inspired throughout scripture • God's readiness to answer showcased by scripture • Our prayers naturally dominated by Christ, whose blessings the Holy Spirit encapsulates • Anticipation of the Spirit's outpouring in the latter days necessitates persistent, fervent supplication • Christians urged to pray boldly, and faithfully with the Spirit as the ultimate focus

THE word of God is full of precepts, encouragements, and examples, tending to excite and induce the people of God to be much in prayer for this mercy. The Spirit of God is the chief of blessings, for it is the sum of all spiritual blessings, which we need infinitely more than others, and wherein our true and eternal happiness consists. That which is the sum of the blessings Christ purchased, is the sum of the blessings Christians have to pray for; but that, as was observed before, is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when the disciples came to Christ, desiring him to teach them to pray,

(**Luke 11**) and he accordingly gave them particular directions for the performance of this duty; he adds,

> **Luke 11: 13** If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

From which words of Christ, we may also observe, that there is no blessing we have so great encouragement to pray for, as the Spirit of God. The words imply, that our heavenly Father is especially ready to bestow his Holy Spirit on them that ask him. The more excellent the nature of any benefit is, which we stand in need of, the more ready God is to bestow it, in answer to prayer. The infinite goodness of God's nature is the more gratified, the grand design of our redemption is the better answered, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, has the greater success in his undertaking and labours; and those desires which are expressed in prayer for the most excellent blessings, are the most excellent desires, and consequently such as God most approves of, and is most ready to gratify.

The Scriptures do not only direct and encourage us, in general, to pray for the Holy Spirit above all things else; but it is the expressly revealed will of God, that his church should be very much in prayer for that glorious outpouring of the Spirit, which is to be in the latter days, and for what shall be accomplished by it. God, speaking of that blessed event, **Ezekiel 36** under the figure of cleansing the house of Israel from all their iniquities (**Ezekiel 36:25**), planting and building their waste and ruined places, and making them to become like the garden of Eden (**Ezekiel 36:36**), and

> **Ezekiel 36:37-38** filling them with men like a flock, like the holy flock, the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts [he says],

> **Ezekiel 36:37** Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.

Which doubtless implies it is the will of God, that extraordinary prayerfulness in his people for this mercy should precede the bestowment of it.

I know of no place in the Bible, where so strange an expression is made use of to signify importunity in prayer, as is used in **Isaiah 62** where the people of God are called upon to be importunate for this mercy:

> **Isaiah 62:6-7** Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

How strong is the phrase! And how loud is this call to the church of God, to be fervent and incessant in their cries to him for this great mercy! How wonderful the words used, concerning the manner in which such worms of the dust should address the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity! And what encouragement is here, to approach the mercy-seat with the greatest freedom, humble boldness, earnestness, constancy, and full assurance of faith, to seek of God this greatest favour that can be sought in Christian prayer!

Prayer for the success of the gospel reflected in the Lord's Prayer • The petitions therein anticipate a glorious future era • This era is characterized by righteousness and holiness • This era seen as the fulfillment of the church's earnest prayers • Such prayers frequently highlighted in the Bible, especially the Psalms • The church depicted as being in 'travail' • The church's desire and prayer for spiritual rebirth aligns with the eager longing of all creation

It is a just observation of a certain eminent minister of the church of Scotland, in a discourse lately published on social prayer, in which, speaking of pleading for the success of the gospel, as required by the Lord's prayer, he says, "That notwithstanding

of its being so compendious, yet the one half of it, that is, three petitions in six, and these the first prescribed, do all relate to this great case:—so that to put any one of these petitions apart, or all of them together, is upon the matter, to pray that the dispensation of the gospel may be blessed with divine power." That glorious day is the proper and appointed time, above all others, for bringing to pass the things requested in each of these petitions. The prophecies everywhere represent that as the time, which God has especially appointed for glorifying his own great name in this world, causing His

Isaiah 40:5 glory [to] be revealed, that all flesh may see it together,

causing it openly to be manifested in the sight of the heathen, filling the whole world with the light of his glory to such a degree, that

Isaiah 24:23 the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed

before that brighter glory; the appointed time for glorifying and magnifying the name of Jesus Christ, causing

Philippians 2:10 every knee to bow and every tongue [to] confess

to him. This is the proper time of God's kingdom coming, or of Christ coming in his kingdom: that is, the very time foretold in **the 2nd of Daniel**, when the Lord God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, in the latter times of the last monarchy, when it is divided into ten kingdoms.

And that is the very time foretold in **the 7th of Daniel**, when there should be given to

Daniel 7:13 given to one like the Son of man,
Daniel 7:14 dominion, glory, and a kingdom, …[that] all people, nations and

languages should serve them;

Daniel 7:27 and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high God,

after the destruction of the little horn (**Daniel 7:11, 26**), that should continue for a time, times, and the dividing of time (**Daniel 7:25**). And that is the time wherein God's

Matthew 6:10 will [shall] be done on earth, as it is done in heaven;

when heaven shall, as it were, be bowed, and come down to the earth, as God's people

Isaiah 60:21 shall be all righteous, [and]

Zechariah 14: 20 holiness to the Lord shall be written on the bells of the horses, [&c.]

So that the three first petitions of the Lord's prayer are, in effect, no other than requests for bringing on this glorious day. And as the Lord's prayer begins with asking for this, in the three first petitions, so it concludes with it in these words,

Matthew 6:13 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Which words imply a request, that God would take to himself his great power, and reign, and manifest his power and glory in the world. Thus Christ teaches us, that it becomes his disciples to seek this above all other things, and make it the first and the last in their prayers, and that every petition should be put up in subordination to the advancement of God's kingdom and glory in the world.

Besides what has been observed of the Lord's prayer, if we look through the whole Bible, and observe all the examples of prayer that we find there recorded, we shall not find so many prayers for any other mercy, as for the deliverance, restoration, and prosperity of the church, and the advancement of God's glory and kingdom of grace in the world. If we well consider the prayers recorded in the book of Psalms, I believe we shall see reason to think, that a very great, if not the greater, part of them, are prayers uttered, either in the name of Christ, or in the name of the church, for such a mercy: and, undoubtedly, the greatest part of the book of Psalms is made up of prayers for this mercy, prophecies of it, and prophetical praises for it.

In order to Christ being mystically born, in the advancement of true religion, and the great increase of true converts, who are spoken of as having Christ formed in them, the Scriptures represent it as requisite, that the church should first be

> **Revelation 12:2** in travail, crying in pain to be delivered;

(**Revelation 12:1**-**5**.) And we have good reason to understand by it her exercising strong desires, wrestling and agonizing with God in prayer, for this event; because we find such figures of speech used in this sense elsewhere: so

> **Galatians 4:19** My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you,
>
> **Isaiah 26:16-17** Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs, so have we been in thy sight, O Lord.

And certainly it is fit, that the church of God should be in travail for that, for which the whole creation travails in pain.

Fervent prayer by God's people for the spread of the gospel to be rewarded • Earnest, communal prayer aligns with God's promises and precedes significant spiritual breakthroughs • Anticipation of Christ's return at the end of the Bible reinforces the call to pray for God's kingdom • The advent of His kingdom on earth draws near when believers pray passionately and collectively for God's glory

The Scripture does not only abundantly manifest it to be the duty of God's people to be much in prayer for this great mercy, but it also abounds with manifold considerations to encourage them in it and animate them with hopes of success. There is perhaps no one thing that the Bible so much promises, in order to encourage the faith, hope, and prayers of the saints, as this; which affords to God's people the clearest evidences that it is their duty to be much in prayer for this mercy. For, undoubtedly, that which God abundantly makes the subject of his promises, God's people should abundantly make the subject of their prayers. It also affords them the strongest assurances that their prayers shall be successful. With what confidence may we go before God, and pray for that, of which we have so many exceeding precious and glorious promises to plead! The very first promise of God to fallen man, (**Genesis 3:15**) It shall bruise they head, is to have its chief fulfilment at that day. And the whole Bible concludes with a promise of the glory of that day, and a prayer for its fulfilment.

> **Revelation 22:20** He that testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The Scripture gives us great reason to think, that when once there comes to appear much of a spirit of prayer in the church of God for this mercy, then it will soon be accomplished. It is evidently with reference to this mercy, that God makes the promise in

> **Isaiah 41:17-19** When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them; I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water; I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, the pine, and the box-tree together.

Spiritual waters and rivers are explained by the apostle John, to be the Holy Spirit, (**John 7:37-39**). It is now a time of scarcity of these spiritual waters; there are, as it were, none. If God's people, in this time of great drought, were but made duly sensible of this calamity, and their own emptiness and necessity, and brought earnestly to thirst and cry for needed supplies, God would, doubtless, soon fulfil this blessed promise. We have another promise much like this, in

> **Psalm 102:16-17** When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory; he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

And remarkable are the words that follow in the next verse,

> **Psalm 102:18** This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created, shall praise the Lord.

Which seems to signify, that this promise shall be left on record to encourage some future generation of God's people to pray and cry earnestly for this mercy, to whom he would fulfil the promise, and thereby give them, and great multitudes of others who should be converted through their prayers, occasion to praise his name.

Who knows but that the generation here spoken of, may be this present generation? One thing mentioned in the character of that future generation, is certainly true

concerning the present, viz. That it is destitute. The church of God is in very low, sorrowful, and needy circumstances; and if the next thing there supposed, were also verified in us, viz. That we were made sensible of our great calamity, and brought to cry earnestly to God for help, I am persuaded the third would be also verified, viz. That our prayers would be turned into joyful praise, for God's gracious answers of them. It is spoken of as a sign and evidence, that the time to favour Zion is come, when God's servants are brought by their prayerfulness for her restoration, in an eminent manner, to show that they favour her stones and dust;

> **Psalm 102:13-14** Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come; for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.

God has respect, to the prayers of his saints in all his government of the world, as we may observe by the representation made **Revelation 8** at the beginning. There we read of seven angels standing before the throne of God, and receiving of him seven trumpets, at the sounding of which, great and mighty changes were to be brought to pass in the world, through many successive ages. But when these angels had received their trumpets, they must stand still, and all must be in silence, not one of them must be allowed to sound, till the prayers of the saints are attended to. The angel of the covenant, as a glorious high priest, comes and stands at the altar, with much incense, to offer with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, before the throne; and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascends up with acceptance before God, out of the angel's hand: and then the angels prepare themselves to sound. And God, in the events of every trumpet, remembers those prayers: as appears at last, by the great and glorious things he accomplishes for his church, in the issue of all, in answer to these prayers, in the event of the last trumpet, which brings the glory of the latter days, when these prayers shall be turned into joyful praises.

> **Revelation 11:15-17** And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ev.' And the four-and-twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, 'We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art and wast and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.'

Since it is the pleasure of God so to honour his people, as to carry on all the designs of his kingdom in this way, viz. by the prayers of his saints; this gives us great reason to think, that whenever the time comes that God gives an extraordinary spirit of prayer for the promised advancement of his kingdom on earth—which is God's great aim in all preceding providences, and the main thing that the spirit of prayer in the saints aims at—then the fulfilment of this event is nigh.

Scripture emphasizes God's readiness to respond to earnest prayers for the spiritual restoration and advancement of His church • God's interventions and blessings, including the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, granted in response to sincere supplications • Historical biblical examples of the success of prayer in achieving divine aid and miraculous events • Persistent, united prayer a means to receive God's grace and bring about the church's triumph over adversity

God, in wonderful grace, is pleased to represent himself, as it were, at the command of his people with regard to mercies of this nature, so as to be ready to bestow them whenever they shall earnestly pray for them;

> **Isaiah 45:11** Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.

What God is speaking of, in this context, is the restoration of his church; not only a restoration from temporal calamity and an outward captivity, by Cyrus; but also a spiritual restoration and advancement, by God's commanding the heavens to

> **Isaiah 45:8** drop down from above, and the skies to pour down righteousness, and causing the earth to open and bring forth salvation, and righteousness to spring up together,

God would have his people ask of him, or inquire of him by earnest prayer, to do this for them; and manifests himself as being at the command of earnest prayers for such a mercy: and a reason why God is so ready to hear such prayers is couched in the words, viz. Because it is prayer for his own church, his chosen and beloved people, his sons and daughters, and the work of his hands; and he cannot deny any thing that is asked for their comfort and prosperity.

God speaks of himself as standing ready to be gracious to his church, and to appear for its restoration, and only waiting for such an opportunity to bestow this mercy, when he shall hear the cries of his people for it, that he may bestow it in answer to their prayers.

> **Isaiah 30:18-19** Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious to thee: and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem. Thou shall weep no more; he will be very gracious unto thee, at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

The words imply, that when God once sees his people much engaged in praying for this mercy, it shall be no longer delayed. Christ desires to hear the voice of his spouse,

Song 2:14 who is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs;

in a low and obscure state, driven into secret corners; he only waits for this, in order to put an end to her state of affliction, and cause

Song 2:17 the day to break, and the shadows to flee away.

If he once heard her voice in earnest prayer, he would come swiftly over the mountains of separation between him and her, as a roe, or young hart; (**Song 2:14, &c**).

When his church is in a low state, and oppressed by her enemies, and cries to him, he will swiftly fly to her relief, as birds fly at the cry of their young (**Isaiah 31:5**). Yea, when that glorious day comes,

Isaiah 65:24 before they call, he will answer them, and while they are yet speaking, he will hear;

and in answer to their prayers, he will make

Isaiah 65:25 the wolf and the lamb feed together, [&c]

When the spouse prays for the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and the coming of Christ, by granting the tokens of his spiritual presence in the church,

Song 4:16 Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out; let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

There seems to be an immediate answer to her prayer, in the next words, in abundant communications of the Spirit, and bestowment of spiritual blessings;

> **Song 5:1** I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

Scripture instances and examples of success in prayer give great encouragement to pray for this mercy. Most of the remarkable deliverances and restorations of the church of God, mentioned in the Scriptures, were in answer to prayer. For instance, the redemption of the church of God from the Egyptian bondage. It was in answer to prayer, that the sun stood still over Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Aijalon, and God's people obtained that great victory over their enemies (**Joshua 10:12-13**); in which wonderful miracle, God seemed to have some respect to a future more glorious event to be accomplished for the Christian church, in the day of her victory ever her enemies, in the latter days; even that event foretold,

> **Isaiah 60:20** Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself.

It was in answer to prayer, that God delivered his church from the mighty hosts of the Assyrians, in Hezekiah's time, which dispensation is a type of the great things God will do for the Christian church in the latter days. The restoration of the church of God from the Babylonish captivity, as abundantly appears both by scripture prophecies, and histories, was in answer to extraordinary prayer, This restoration of the Jewish church, after the destruction of Babylon, is evidently a type of the glorious restoration of the Christian church, after the destruction of the kingdom of antichrist; which is abundantly spoken of in **the revelation of St. John**, as the antitype of Babylon. Samson out of weakness received strength to pull down Dagon's temple, through prayer. So the people of God, in the latter days, will out of weakness be made

strong, and will become the instruments of pulling down the kingdom of Satan by prayer.

The Spirit of God was poured out upon Christ himself, in answer to prayer:

> **Luke 3:21-22** Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

The Spirit descends on the church of Christ, the same way, in this respect, that it descended on the head of the church. The greatest effusion of the Spirit that ever yet has been, even that which was in the primitive times of the Christian church, which began in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, was in answer to extraordinary prayer. When the disciples were gathered together to their Lord, a little before his ascension,

> **Acts 1:4** he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me,

i.e. the promise of the Holy Ghost. What they had their hearts upon was the restoration of the kingdom of Israel:

> **Acts 1:6** Lord (say they), wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And according to Christ's direction, after his ascension, they returned to Jerusalem, and continued in united fervent prayer and supplication. It seems they spent their time in it from day to day, without ceasing; till the Spirit came down in a wonderful manner upon them, and that work was begun which never ceased, and all the chief nations were converted to Christianity. And that glorious deliverance and advancement of the Christian church, that was in the days of Constantine the Great, followed the

extraordinary cries of the church of God, as the matter is represented, **Revelation 6** at the opening of the fifth seal. The church in her suffering slate, is represented crying with a loud voice,

> **Revelation 6:10** How long, Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

And the opening of the next seal brings on that mighty revolution, in the days of Constantine, compared to those great changes that shall be at the end of the world.

As there is so great and manifold reason from the word of God, to think that if a spirit of earnest prayer for that great effusion of the Spirit of God which I am speaking of, prevailed in the Christian church, the mercy would be soon granted; so those that are engaged in such prayer might well expect the first benefit. God will come to those that are seeking him and waiting for him; (**Isaiah 25:9** and **26:8**). When Christ came in the flesh, he was first revealed to them who were waiting for the consolation of Israel, and looking for redemption in Jerusalem, (**Luke 1:25, 38**). And in that great outpouring of the Spirit that was in the days of the apostles, which was attended with such glorious effects among the Jews and Gentiles, the Spirit came down first on those that were engaged in united earnest prayer for it. A special blessing is promised to them that love and pray for the prosperity of the church of God,

> **Psalm 122:6** Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee.

SECT. VI

Motives to excite us

The need for divine intervention in addressing the spiritual and moral decay of our time • Widespread calamities, war, infidelity, heresy, vice, and religious contention, in Britain, Scotland, and the American colonies • The deep need for spiritual renewal • These challenges seen as a call to prayer for God's mercy and the outpouring of His Spirit • Hope expressed, citing instances where prayer led to divine intervention • Earnest prayer for a revival of true religion and virtue urged

WE are presented with many motives in the dispensations of divine providence, at this day, to excite us to be much in prayer for this mercy. There is much in providence to show us our need of it and put us on desiring it. The great outward calamities, in which the world is involved; and particularly the bloody war that embroils and wastes the nations of Christendom, and in which our nation has so great a share, may well make all that believe God's word, and love mankind, earnestly long and pray for that day, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the nations shall beat their swords into plow-shares.

But especially do the spiritual calamities and miseries of the present time, show our great need of that blessed effusion of God's Spirit: there having been, for so long a time, so great a withholding of the Spirit, from the greater part of the Christian world, and such dismal consequences of it, in the great decay of vital piety, and the exceeding prevalence of infidelity, heresy, and all manner of vice and wickedness. Of this a most affecting account has lately been published in a pamphlet, printed in London, and reprinted in Scotland, entitled "Britain's Remembrancer;" by which it seems that luxury, and wickedness of almost every kind, is well high come to the utmost extremity in the nation; and if vice should continue to prevail and increase for one generation more, as it has the generation past, it looks as though the nation could

hardly continue in being, but must sink under the weight of its own corruption and wickedness.

And the state of things in the other parts of the British dominions, besides England, is very deplorable. The church of Scotland has very much lost her glory, greatly departing from her ancient purity, and excellent order; and has of late been bleeding with great and manifold wounds, occasioned by their divisions and hot contentions. And there are frequent complaints from thence, by those that lament the corruptions of that land, of sin and wickedness of innumerable kinds, abounding and prevailing of late, among all ranks of men. And how lamentable is the moral and religious state of these American colonies, of New England in particular! How much is that kind of religion which was professed, much experience, and practice, in the first and apparently the best times in New England, grown and growing out of credit! What fierce and violent contentions have been of late among ministers and people, about things of a religious nature! How much is the gospel-ministry grown into contempt! and the work of the ministry, in many respects, laid under uncommon difficulties, and even in danger of sinking amongst us! How many of our congregations and churches rending in pieces! Church discipline weakened, and ordinances less and less regarded! What wild and extravagant notions, gross delusions of the devil, and strange practices, have prevailed, and do still prevail in many places, under a pretext of extraordinary purity, spirituality, liberty, and zeal against formality, usurpation, and conformity to the world! How strong, deeply rooted, and general, are the prejudices that prevail against vital religion and the power of godliness, and almost everything that appertains to it, or tends to it! How apparently are the hearts of people, everywhere, uncommonly shut up against all means and endeavours to awaken sinners and revive religion! Vice and immorality, of all kinds, withal increasing and unusually prevailing! May not an attentive view and consideration of such a state of things well influence the people that favour the dust of Zion, to earnestness in their cries to God for a

general outpouring of his Spirit, which alone can be an effectual remedy for these evils?

Besides, the fresh attempts made by the antichristian powers against the protestant interest, in their late endeavours to restore a popish government in Great Britain, the chief bulwark of the protestant cause; as also the persecution lately revived against the protestants in France; may well give occasion to the people of God, to renewed and extraordinary earnestness in their prayers to him, for the fulfilment of the promised downfall of antichrist, and that liberty and glory of his church that shall follow.

As there is much in the present state of things to show us our great need of this mercy, and to cause us to desire it; so there is very much to convince us, that God alone can bestow it; and show us our entire and absolute dependence on him for it. The insufficiency of human abilities to bring to pass any such happy change in the world as is foretold, or to afford any remedy to mankind from such miseries as have been mentioned, does now remarkable appear. Those observations of the apostle,

> **1 Corinthians 1:21** The world by wisdom knows not God, and God makes foolish the wisdom of this world,

never were verified to such a degree as they are now. Great discoveries have been made in the arts and sciences, and never was human learning carried to such a height, as in the present age; and yet never did the cause of religion and virtue run so low, in nations professing the true religion. Never was there an age wherein so many learned and elaborate treatises have been written, in proof of the truth and divinity of the Christian religion; yet never were there so many infidels, among those that were brought up under the light of the gospel. It is an age, as is supposed, of great light, freedom of thought, discovery of truth in matters of religion, detection of the weakness and bigotry of our ancestors, and of the folly and absurdity of the notions

of those who were accounted eminent divines in former generations; which notions, it is imagined, destroyed the very foundations of virtue and religion, and enervated all precepts of morality, and in effect annulled all difference between virtue and vice; and yet vice and wickedness did never so prevail, like an overflowing deluge. It is an age wherein those mean and stingy principles, as they are called, of our forefathers, which are supposed to have deformed religion, and led to unworthy thoughts of God, are very much discarded and grown out of credit, and thoughts of the nature of religion, and of the Christian scheme, supposed to be more free, noble, and generous, are entertained. But yet never was there an age, wherein religion in general was so much despised and trampled on, and Jesus Christ and God Almighty so blasphemed and treated with open, daring contempt.

The exceeding weakness of mankind, and their insufficiency in themselves for bringing to pass anything great and good in the world, with regard to its moral and spiritual state, remarkably appears in many things that have attended and followed the extraordinary religious commotion, that has lately been in many parts of Great Britain and America. The infirmity of human nature has been manifested, in a very affecting manner, in the various passions of men, and the innumerable ways in which they have been moved, as a reed shaken with the wind, on occasion of the changes and incidents, both public and private, of such a state of things. How many errors and extremes are we liable to! How quickly blinded, misled, and confounded! And how easily does Satan make fools of men, if confident in their own wisdom and strength, and left to themselves! Many, in the late wonderful season, were ready to admire and trust in men, as if all depended on such and such instruments; at least, ascribed too much to their skill and zeal, because God was pleased to employ them a little while to do extraordinary things; but what great things does the skill and zeal of instruments do now, when the Spirit of God is withdrawn?

As the present state of things may well excite earnest desires after the promised general revival and advancement of true religion, and serve to show our dependence on God for it, so there are many things in providence, of late, that tend to encourage us in prayer for such a mercy. That infidelity, heresy, and vice do so prevail, and that corruption and wickedness are risen to such an extreme height, is exceeding deplorable; but yet, I think, considering God's promises to his church, and the ordinary method of his dispensations, hope may justly be gathered from it, that the present state of things will not last long, but that a happy change is nigh. We know, that God never will desert the cause of truth and holiness, nor suffer the gates of hell to prevail against the church; and that usually, from the beginning of the world, the state of the church has appeared most dark, just before some remarkable deliverance and advancement: "Many a time, may Israel say, Had not the Lord been on our side, then our enemies would have swallowed us up quick. The waters had overwhelmed us." The church's extremity has often been God's opportunity for magnifying his power, mercy, and faithfulness towards her. The interest of vital piety has long been in general decaying, and error and wickedness prevailing; it looks as though the disease were now come to a crisis, and that things cannot remain long in such a state, but that a change may be expected in one respect or other.

And not only God's manner of dealing with his church in former ages, and many things in the promises and prophecies of his word, but also several things appertaining to present and late aspects of divine providence, seem to give reason to hope that the change will be such, as to magnify God's free grace and sovereign mercy, and not his revenging justice and wrath. There are certain times, which are days of vengeance, appointed for the more special displays of God's justice and indignation. God has also his days of mercy, accepted times, chosen seasons, wherein it is his pleasure to show mercy, and nothing shall hinder it; times appointed for the magnifying of the Redeemer and his merits, and for the triumphs of his grace,

wherein his grace shall triumph over men's unworthiness in its greatest height. And if we consider God's late dealings with our nation and this land, it appears to me that there is much to make us think that this is such a day!

God's patience was very wonderful of old, towards the ten tribes, and the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and afterwards to the Jews in the times of Christ and the apostles; but it seems to me, all things considered, not equal to his patience and mercy to us. God does not only forbear to destroy us, notwithstanding all our provocations, but he has wrought great things for us, wherein his hand has been most visible, and his arm made bare; especially those two instances in America, God succeeding us against Cape-Breton, and confounding the Armada from France the last year; dispensations of providence, which, if considered in all their circumstances, were so wonderfully and apparently manifesting an extraordinary divine interposition, that they come perhaps the nearest to a parallel with God's wonderful works of old, in the times of Moses, Joshua, and Hezekiah, of any that have been in these latter ages of the world. And it is to my present purpose to observe, that God was pleased to do great things for us in both these instances, in answer to extraordinary prayer. Such remarkable appearances of a spirit of prayer, on any particular public occasion, have not been in the land, at any time within my observation and memory, as on occasion of the affair of Cape-Breton. And it is worthy to be remembered, that God sent that great storm on the fleet of our enemies the last year, that finally dispersed, and utterly confounded them, and caused them wholly to give over their designs against us, the very night after our day of public fasting and prayer, for our protection and their confusion.

Thus, although it be a day of great apostacy and provocation, yet it is apparently a day of the wonderful works of God; wonders of power and mercy; which may well lead us to think on those two places of Scripture;

Psalm 119:126 It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law. [And]

Psalm 75:1 That thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare.

God appears, as it were, loth to destroy us, or deal with us according to our iniquities, great and aggravated as they are; and shows that mercy pleases him. Though a corrupt time, it is plain, by experience, that it is a time wherein God may be found, and he stands ready to show mercy in answer to prayer. He that has done such great things, and has so wonderfully and speedily answered prayer for temporal mercies, will much more give the Holy Spirit if we ask him. He marvellously preserves us, and waits to be gracious to us, as though he chose to make us monuments of his grace, and not of his vengeance, and waits only to have us open our mouths wide, that he may fill them.

The late remarkable religious awakenings, in many parts of the Christian world, may justly encourage us in prayer for the promised glorious and universal outpouring of the Spirit of God. "About the year 1732 or 1733, God was pleased to pour out his Spirit on the people of Salzburg in Germany, who were living under popish darkness, in a most uncommon manner; so that above twenty thousand of them, merely by reading the Bible, which they made a shift to get in their own language, were determined to throw off popery, and embrace the reformed religion; yea, and to become so very zealous for the truth and gospel of Jesus Christ, as to be willing to suffer the loss of all things in the world, and actually to forsake their houses, lands, goods, and relations, that they might enjoy the pure preaching of the gospel;—with great earnestness, and tears in their eyes, beseeching protestant ministers to preach to them, in different places where they came, when banished from their own country." In the year 1734 and 1735, there appeared a very great, and general awakening, in the county of Hampshire, in the province of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England, and also in many parts of Connecticut. Since this, there has been a far more extensive

awakening of many thousands in England, Wales, and Scotland, and almost all the British provinces in North America. There has also been something remarkable of the same kind, in some places in the united Netherlands; and about two years ago, a very great awakening and reformation of many of the Indians, in the Jerseys, and Pennsylvania, even among such as never embraced Christianity before: and within these two years, a great awakening in Virginia and Maryland.

Notwithstanding the great diversity of opinions about the issue of some of these awakenings, yet I know of none, who have denied that there have been great awakenings of late, in these times and places, and that multitudes have been brought to more than common concern for their salvation, and for a time were made more than ordinarily afraid of sin, and brought to reform their former vicious courses, and take much pains for their salvation. If I should be of the opinion of those who think, that these awakenings and striving of God's Spirit have been generally not well improved, and so, as to most, have ended in enthusiasm and delusion; yet, that the Spirit of God has been of late so wonderfully striving with such multitudes—in so many different parts of the world, and even to this day, in one place or other, continues to awaken men—is what I should take great encouragement from, that God was about to do something more glorious, and would, before he finishes, bring things to a greater ripeness, and not finally suffer this work of his to be frustrated and rendered abortive by Satan's crafty management. And may we not hope that these unusual commotions are the forerunners of something exceeding glorious approaching; as the wind, earthquake, and fire at mount Sinai, were forerunners of that voice wherein God was in a more eminent manner (**1 Kings 19:11-12**)?

SECT. VII

The beauty and good tendency of such union

The beauty and effectiveness of united prayer of Christians worldwide • Collective prayer viewed as a reflection of the harmonious and loving nature of Christian society, likening it to the unity seen in heaven • United prayer seen as fostering mutual affection, concern for the church's welfare, and personal spiritual growth • Biblical examples that support the power and importance of joint prayer, and its role in achieving God's purposes

How condecent, how beautiful, and of good tendency would it be, for multitudes of Christians, in various parts of the world, by explicit agreement, to unite in such prayer as is proposed to us. Union is one of the most amiable things that pertains to human society; yea, it is one of the most beautiful and happy things on earth, which indeed makes earth most like heaven. God has made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth; hereby teaching us this moral lesson, that it becomes mankind all to be united as one family. And this is agreeable to the nature God has given men, disposing them to society; and the circumstances in which he has placed them, so many ways obliging and necessitating them to it. A civil union, or an harmonious agreement among men in the management of their secular concerns, is amiable; but much more a pious union, and sweet agreement in the great business for which man was created, even the business of religion; the life and soul of which is LOVE. Union is spoken of in Scripture as the peculiar beauty of the church of Christ,

> **Song 6:9** My dove, my undefiled, is but one, she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her; the daughters saw her and blessed her, yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.
> **Psalm 122:5** Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.
> **Ephesians 4:3-6** Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of

your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Ephesians 4:16 The whole body fitly framed together and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying itself in love.

As it is the glory of the church of Christ, that in all her members, however dispersed, she is thus one, one holy society, one city, one family, one body; so it is very desirable, that this union should be manifested, and become visible. It is highly desirable, that her distant members should act as one, in those things that concern the common interest of the whole body, and in those duties and exercises wherein they have to do with their common Lord and Head, as seeking of him the common prosperity. As it becomes all the members of a particular family, who are strictly united, and have in so many respects one common interest, to unite in prayer to God for the things they need; and as it becomes a nation, at certain seasons, visibly to unite in prayer for those public mercies that concern the interest of the whole nation: so, it becomes the church of Christ—which is one holy nation, a peculiar people, one heavenly family, more strictly united, in many respects, and having infinitely greater interests that are common to the whole, than any other society—visibly to unite, and expressly to agree together, in prayer to God for the common prosperity; and above all, that common prosperity and advancement, so unspeakably great and glorious, which God hath so abundantly promised to fulfil in the latter days.

It becomes Christians, with whose character a narrow selfish spirit, above all others, disagrees, to be much in prayer for that public mercy, wherein consists the welfare and happiness of the whole body of Christ, of which they are members, and the greatest good of mankind. And union or agreement in prayer is especially becoming, when Christians pray for that mercy, which above all other things concerns them

unitedly, and tends to the relief, prosperity, and glory of the whole body, as well as of each individual member.

Such an union in prayer for the general outpouring of the Spirit of God, would not only be beautiful, but profitable too. It would tend very much to promote union and charity between distant members of the church of Christ, to promote public spirit, love to the church of God, and concern for the interest of Zion; as well as be an amiable exercise and manifestation of such a spirit. Union in religious duties, especially in the duty of prayer, in praying one with and for another, and jointly for their common welfare, above almost all other things, tends to promote mutual affection and endearment. And if ministers and people should, by particular agreement and joint resolution, set themselves, in a solemn and extraordinary manner, from time to time, to pray for the revival of religion in the world, it would naturally tend more to awaken in them a concern about things of this nature, and more of a desire after such a mercy. It would engage them to more attention to such an affair, make them more inquisitive about it, more ready to use endeavours to promote what they, with so many others, spend so much time in praying for. It would make them more ready to rejoice, and praise God, when they see or hear of anything of that nature or tendency. And, in a particular manner, it would naturally tend to engage ministers—the business of whose lives it should be, to seek the welfare of the church of Christ, and the advancement of his kingdom—to greater diligence and earnestness in their work; and it would have a tendency to the spiritual profit and advantage of each particular person. For persons to be thus engaged in extraordinary prayer for the revival and flourishing state of religion in the world, will naturally lead each one to reflect on himself, and consider how religion flourishes in his own heart, and how far his example contributes to that for which he is praying.

On the whole there is great and particular encouragement given in the word of God, to express union and agreement in prayer. Daniel, when he had a great thing to request of God, viz. That he by his Holy Spirit would miraculously reveal to him a great secret, which none of the wise men, astrologers, magicians, or soothsayers of Babylon could find out, he goes to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and they agree together, that they will unitedly desire mercies of the God of heaven, concerning this secret; and their joint request was soon granted. God put great honour upon them, above all the wise men of Babylon, not only to their great joy, but also to the admiration and astonishment of Nebuchadnezzar; insomuch, that the great and haughty monarch, as we are told, fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and owned that his God was of a truth a God of gods, and he greatly promoted Daniel and his praying companions in the province of Babylon. Esther, when she had a yet more important request to make, for the saving of the church of God, and whole Jewish nation, dispersed through the empire of Persia, when on the brink of ruin, sends to all the Jews in the city Shushan, to pray and fast with her and her maidens; and their united prayers prevail; so that the event was wonderful. Instead of the intended destruction of the Jews, their enemies are destroyed everywhere, and they are defended, honoured, and promoted; their sorrow and distress is turned into great gladness, feasting, triumph, and mutual joyful congratulations.

The encouragement to explicit agreement in prayer is great from such instances as these; but it is yet greater from those wonderful words of our blessed Redeemer,

> **Matthew 18:19** I say unto you, that if any two of you shall agree on earth, touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Christ is pleased to give this great encouragement to the union of his followers in this excellent and holy exercise of seeking and serving God; a holy union and communion

of his people being that which he greatly desires and delights in; that which he came into the world to bring to pass; that which he especially prayed for with his dying breath; (**John 17**) that which he died for; and which was one chief end of the whole affair of our redemption by him;

> **Ephesians 1:7-10** In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.

PART III

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

I COME now, as was proposed, in the third place, to answer and obviate some objections, which some may be ready to make against what has been proposed to us.

SECT. I

Such agreement superstitious, answered

Concerns about establishing specific times for prayer and worship as potentially leading to human-made religious obligations addressed • Specific times established as a matter of convenience rather than an attempt to create sacred or holy days • Agreement to pray at specific times must not impose religious laws or bind consciences • Difference between voluntary, agreed-upon practices and superstitious imposition of practices as sacred or obligatory

SOME may be ready to say, that for Christians in such a manner to set apart certain seasons, every week, and every quarter, to be religiously observed and kept for the purposes proposed, from year to year, would be, in effect, to establish certain periodical times of human invention and appointment, to be kept holy to God; and so to do the very thing, that has ever been objected against, by a very great part of the most eminent Christians and divines among protestants, as what men have no right to do; it being for them to add to God's institutions, and introduce their own inventions and establishments into the stated worship of God, and lay unwarrantable bonds on men's consciences, and do what naturally tends to superstition.

To this I would say, there can be no justice in such an objection against this proposal, as made to us in the fore-mentioned Memorial. Indeed, that caution appears in the project itself, and in the manner in which it is proposed to us, that there is not so much as any colour for the objection. The proposal is such, and so well guarded, that there seems to be no room for the weakest Christian who well observes it, to

understand those things to be implied in it, which have indeed been objected against by many eminent Christians and divines among protestants, as entangling men's consciences, and adding to divine institutions, &c. Here is no pretence of establishing anything by authority; no appearance of any claim of power in the proposers, or right to have any regard paid to their determinations or proposals, by virtue of any deference due to them, in any respect. So far from that, they expressly propose what they have thought of to others, for their amendments and improvements, declaring that they choose rather to receive and spread the directions and proposals of others, than to be the first authors of any.

No times, not sanctified by God's own institution, are proposed to be observed more than others, under any notion of such times being, in any respect, more holy, or more honourable, or worthy of any preference, or distinguishing regard; either as being sanctified, or made honourable, by authority, or by any great events of divine providence, or any relation to any holy persons or things; but only as circumstantially convenient, helpful to memory, especially free from worldly business, near to the times of the administration of public ordinances, &c. None attempts to lay any bonds on others, with respect to this matter; or to desire that they should lay any bonds on themselves; or look on themselves as under any obligations, either by power or promise; or so much as come into any absolute determination in their own minds, to set apart any stated days from secular affairs; or even to fix on any part of such days, without liberty to alter circumstances, as shall be found expedient; and also liberty left to a future alteration of judgment, as to expediency, on future trial and consideration. All that is proposed is, that such as fall in with what is proposed in their judgments and inclinations, while they do so should strengthen, assist, and encourage their brethren that are of the same mind, by visibly consenting and joining with them in the affair. Is here anything like making laws in matters of conscience and religion, or adding men's institutions to God's; or any show of imposition, or superstitious

esteeming and preferring one day above another, or any possible ground of entanglement of any one's conscience?

For men to go about by law to establish and limit circumstances of worship, not established or limited by any law of God, such as precise time, place, and order, may be in many respects of dangerous tendency. But surely it cannot be unlawful or improper, for Christians to come into some agreement, with regard to these circumstances: for it is impossible to carry on any social worship without it. There is no institution of Scripture requiring any people to meet together to worship God in such a spot of ground, or at such an hour of the day; but yet these must be determined by agreement; or else there will be no social worship, in any place, or any hour. So we are not determined by institution, what the precise order of the different parts of worship shall be; what shall precede, and what shall follow; whether praying or singing shall be first, and what shall be next, and what shall conclude: but yet some order must be agreed on, by the congregation that unite in worship; otherwise they cannot jointly carry on divine worship, in any way of method at all. If a congregation of Christians agree to begin their public worship with prayer, next to sing, then to attend on the preaching of the word, and to conclude with prayer; and do by consent carry on their worship in this order from year to year; though this order is not appointed in Scripture, none will call it superstition. And if a great number of congregations, through a whole land, or more lands than one, do, by a common consent, keep the same method of public worship; none will pretend to find fault with it. But yet for any to go about to bind all to such a method, would be usurpation and imposition. And if such a precise order should be regarded as sacred, as though no other could be acceptable to God, this would be superstition. If a particular number of Christians shall agree, that besides the stated public worship of the sabbath, they will, when their circumstances allow, meet together, to carry on some religious exercises, on a sabbath-day night, for their mutual edification; or if several societies

agree to meet together in different places at that time; this is no superstition; though there be no institution for it. If people in different congregations, voluntarily agree to take turns to meet together in the house of God, to worship him and hear a public lecture, once a month, or once in six weeks; it is not unlawful though there be no institution for it: but yet, to do this as a thing sacred, indispensable, and binding on men's consciences, would be superstition. If Christians of several neighbouring congregations, instead of a lecture, agree on some special occasion to keep a circular fast, each congregation taking its turn in a certain time and order, fixed on by consent; or if, instead of keeping fast by turns, on different days, one on one week and one on another, they shall all agree to keep a fast on the same day, and to do this either once or frequently, according as they shall judge their own circumstances, or the dispensations of the divine providence, or the importance of the mercy they seek, require; is there any more superstition in this?

SECT. II

That such agreement is whimsical and pharisaical, answered

SOME may be ready to say, there seems to be something whimsical in its being insisted on that God's people in different places should put up their prayers for this mercy at the same time; as though their prayers would be more forcible on that account; and as if God would not be so likely to hear prayers offered up by many, though they happened not to pray at the same time, as he would if he heard them all at the same moment.

To this I would say, if such an objection be made, it must be through misunderstanding. It is not signified or implied in anything said in the proposal, or in any arguments made use of to enforce it, that I have seen, that the prayers of a great number in different places, will be more forcible, merely because of that circumstance, of their being put up at the same time. It is indeed supposed that it will be very

expedient, that certain times for united prayer should be agreed on: which it may be, without implying the thing supposed in the objection, on the following accounts.

1. Agreed-upon prayer at specific times seen as a practical way to foster unity among Christians in different locations • Doesn't inherently make prayers more effective • More likely to be remembered and adhered to • Impactful prayer for the revival of religion made more likely

1. This seems to be a proper expedient for promoting and maintaining an union among Christians of distant places, in extraordinary prayer for such a mercy. It appears, from what was before observed, that there ought to be extraordinary prayers among Christians for this mercy; and that it is fit God's people should agree and unite in it. Though there be no reason to suppose that prayers will be more prevalent, merely from the circumstance, that different persons pray exactly at the same time; yet there will be more reason to hope, that prayers for such mercy will be prevalent, when God's people are very much in prayer for it, and when many of them are united in it. If therefore agreeing on certain times for united and extraordinary prayer, be a likely means to promote an union of many in extraordinary prayer, then there is more reason to hope, that there will be prevalent prayer for such a mercy, on occasion of certain times for extraordinary prayer being agreed on. But that agreeing on certain times for united extraordinary prayer, is a likely and proper means to promote and maintain such prayer, I think will be easily evident to anyone that considers the matter. If there should be only a loose agreement or consent to it as a duty, or a thing fit and proper, that Christians should be much in prayer for the revival of religion, and much more in it than they used to be, without agreeing on particular times, how liable would such a lax agreement be to be soon forgotten, and that extraordinary prayerfulness, which is fixed to no certain times, to be totally neglected! To be sure, distant parts of the church of Christ could have no confidence in one another, that this would not be the case. If these ministers in Scotland, for instance, instead of the

proposal they have made, had sent abroad only a general proposal, that God's people should, for the time to come, be much in more prayer for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, than had been common among Christians heretofore; and they should hear their proposals were generally allowed to be good; and that ministers and people, in one place and another, owned that it was a very proper thing; could they, from this only, have the like grounds of dependence, that God's people, in various parts of the Christian world, would indeed henceforward act unitedly, in maintaining extraordinary prayer for this mercy? and how much more promising would it be, if they should not only hear, that the duty in general was approved of, but also that particular times were actually fixed on for the purpose, and an agreement and joint resolution was come into, that they would, unless extraordinarily hindered, set apart such particular seasons to be spent in this duty, from time to time, maintaining this practice for a certain number of years!

2. Visibility and beauty of Christian unity enhanced by having agreed-upon times • God honored • Believers encouraged and comforted • Sense of global Christian unity increased • Extent and nature of united prayer made more visible

2. For God's people in distant places to agree on certain times for extraordinary prayer, wherein they will unitedly put up their requests to God, is a means fit and proper to be used, in order to the visibility of their union in such prayer. Union among God's people in prayer is truly beautiful, as before shown; it is beautiful in the eyes of Christ, and it is justly beautiful and amiable in the eyes of Christians. And if so, then it must needs be desirable to Christians that such union should be visible. If it would be a lovely sight in the eyes of the church of Christ, and much to their comfort, to behold various and different parts of the church united in extraordinary prayer for the general outpouring of the Spirit, then it must be desirable to them that such an union should be visible, that they may behold it. But the agreement and union of a

multitude in their worship becomes visible, by an agreement in some external visible circumstances. Worship itself becomes visible worship, by something external and visible belonging to the worship, and no other way: therefore, union and agreement of many in worship becomes visible no other way, but by union and agreement in the external and visible acts and circumstances of the worship. Such union and agreement becomes visible, particularly by an agreement in those two visible circumstances, time and place. When a number of Christians live near together, and their number and situation is convenient, and they have a desire visibly to unite in any acts of worship, they are wont to make their union and agreement visible by an union in both these circumstances. But when a much greater number of Christians, dwelling in distant places so that they cannot unite by worshipping in the same place, yet desire a visible union in some extraordinary worship; they are wont to make their union and agreement visible, by agreeing only in the former of those circumstances, viz. that of time. This is common in the appointment of public fasts and thanksgivings; the same day is appointed, for the performance of that extraordinary worship, as a visible note of union. To this common sense leads Christians in all countries. And the wisdom of God seems to dictate the same thing in appointing that his people, in their stated and ordinary public worship every week, should manifest this union and communion one with another, as one holy society; by offering up their worship on the same day; for the greater glory of their common Lord, and the greater edification and comfort of the whole body.

If any yet find fault with the proposal of certain times to be agreed on by God's people in different places, in the manner set forth in the Memorial, I would ask, whether they object against any such thing, as a visible agreement of God's people, in different parts of the world, in extraordinary prayer, for the coming of Christ's kingdom? Whether such a thing being visible, would not be much for the public honour of God's name? And whether it would not tend to Christians' assistance, and

encouragement in the duty, and also to their mutual comfort, by a manifestation of that union which is amiable to Christ and Christians, and to promote a Christian union among professing Christians in general? And whether we have not reason to think from the word of God, that before that great revival of religion foretold is accomplished, there will be a visible union of the people of God, in various parts of the world, in extraordinary prayer for this mercy? If these things are allowed, I would then ask further, whether any method can be thought of or devised, whereby an express agreement, and visible union of God's people, in different parts of the world, can be maintained, but this, or some other equivalent to it? If there be any express agreement about any extraordinary prayer at all, it must first be proposed by some, and others must fall in, as represented in my text. And if extraordinary prayer be agreed on, and maintained by many in different places, visibly one to another, then it must be agreed with regard to some circumstances, what extraordinary prayer shall be kept up; and this must be seen and heard of, from one to another. But how shall this be, when no times are agreed upon, and it is never known, by those in different parts, when, or how often, any others do attend this extraordinary prayer? The consequence must necessarily be, that it can never be known how far, or in what respect, others join with them in extraordinary prayer, or whether they do it at all; and not so much as one circumstance of extraordinary prayer will be visible; and indeed nothing will be visible about it. So that I think anybody that well considers the matter, will see that he who determines to oppose such a method as is proposed to us in the Memorial, and all others equivalent to it, is, in effect, determined to oppose there ever being any such thing at all, as an agreed and visibly united extraordinary prayer, in the church of God, for a general outpouring of the Spirit.

3. Worshippers encouraged and animated by simultaneous prayer of multitudes • Not inherently more effective with God • Extraordinary religious exercises beneficial for Christian fellowship • Not a form of Pharisaism

3. Though it would not be reasonable to suppose that merely such a circumstance, as many people praying at the same time, will directly have any prevalence with God; yet such a circumstance may reasonably be supposed to have influence on the minds of men. Will any deny that it has any reasonable tendency to encourage, animate, or in any respect to help the mind of a Christian in serving God in any duty of religion, to join with a Christian congregation, and to see an assembly of his dear brethren around him, at the same time engaged with him in the same duty? And supposing one in this assembly of saints is blind, but has ground of satisfaction that there is present a multitude of God's people united with him in the same service; will any deny, that his supposing this, and being satisfied of it, can have any reasonable influence upon his mind, to excite and encourage him, or in any respect to assist him, in his worship? The encouragement that one has in worship, by others being united with him, is not merely by the external senses, but by the knowledge the mind has of that union, or the satisfaction the understanding has that others, at that time, have their minds engaged with him in the same service; which may be, when those unitedly engaged are at a distance one from another, as well as when they are present. If one be present in a worshipping assembly and sees their external behaviour; their union with him in worship, he does not see; and what he sees, encourages him in worship, only as an evidence of that union and concurrence which is out of sight. And a person may have such evidence of this, concerning absent worshippers, as may give him satisfaction of their union with him, no less than if they were present. And therefore the consideration of others being at the same time engaged with him in worship, though absent, may as reasonably animate and encourage him in his worship, as if they were present.

There is no wisdom in finding fault with human nature, as God has made it. Things that exist now, are in themselves no more important, than the like things, in time past, or in time to come: yet, it is evident, that the consideration of things being present, at

least in most cases, especially affects human nature. For instance, if a man could be certainly informed, that his dear child at a distance was now under some extreme suffering; or, that an absent most dear friend was at this time thinking of him, and in the exercise of great affection towards him, or in the performance of some great deed of friendship; or, if a pious parent should know that now his child was in the act of some enormous wickedness; or that, on the contrary, he was now in some eminent exercise of grace, and in the performance of an extraordinary deed of virtue and piety; would not those things be more affecting to human nature, for being considered as things at the present time, than if considered as at some distance of time, either past or future? Hundreds of other instances might be mentioned wherein it is no less plain, that the consideration of the present existence of things, gives them advantage to affect the minds of men. Yea, it is undoubtedly so with things in general, that take any hold at all of our affections, and towards which we are not indifferent. And if the mind of a particular child of God is disposed to be affected by the consideration of the religion of other saints, and of their union and concurrence with him in any particular duty or act of religion, I can see no reason why the human mind should not be more moved by the object of its affection, when considered as present, as well in this case, as in any other case: yea, I think, we may on good grounds determine there is none.

Nor may we look upon it as an instance of the peculiar weakness of human nature, that men are more affected with things considered as present, than those that are distant: but it seems to be a thing common to finite minds, and so to all created intelligent beings. Thus, the angels in heaven have peculiar joy, on occasion of the conversion of a sinner, when recent, beyond what they have in that which has been long past. If any therefore shall call it silly and whimsical in any, to value and regard such a circumstance, in things of religion, as their existing at the present time, so as to

be the more affected with them for that; they must call the host of angels in heaven a parcel of silly and whimsical beings.

I remember, the Spectator, (whom none will call a whimsical author,) somewhere speaking of different ways of dear friends mutually expressing their affection, and maintaining a kind of intercourse, in absence one from another, mentions such an instance as this, with much approbation, viz. That two friends, who were greatly endeared one to another, when about to part, and to be for a considerable time necessarily absent, that they might have the comfort of the enjoyment of daily mutual expressions of friendship in their absence; agreed that they would, every day, precisely at such an hour, retire from all company and business, to pray for one another. Which agreement they so valued and so strictly observed, that when the hour came, scarce anything would hinder them. And rather than miss this opportunity, they would suddenly break off conversation, and abruptly leave company they were engaged with. If this be a desirable way of intercourse of particular friends, is it not a desirable and amiable way of maintaining intercourse and fellowship between brethren in Christ Jesus, and the various members of the holy family of God, in different parts of the world, to come into an agreement, that they will set apart certain times, which they will spend with one accord, in extraordinary prayer to their heavenly Father, for the advancement of the kingdom, and the glory of their common dear Lord and Saviour, and for each other's prosperity and happiness, and the greatest good of all their fellow-creatures through the world?

Some perhaps may suppose that it looks too much like Pharisaism, when persons engage in any such extraordinary religious exercises, beyond what is appointed by express institution, for them thus designedly to make it manifest abroad in the world, and so openly to distinguish themselves from others. But all open engagement in extraordinary exercises of religion, not expressly enjoined by institution, is not

Pharisaism, nor has ever been so reputed in the Christian church. As when a particular church or congregation of Christians agree together to keep a day of fasting and prayer, on some special occasion; or when public days of fasting and thanksgiving are kept, throughout a Christian province or country: and though it be ordinarily the manner for the civil magistrate to lead in setting apart such days; yet that alters not the case: if it be Pharisaism in the society openly to agree in such extraordinary exercises of religion, it is not less Pharisaism, for the heads of the society leading in the affair. And if the civil magistrate was not of the society of Christians, nor concerned himself in their affairs; yet this would not render it the less suitable for Christians, on proper occasions, jointly, and visibly one to another, to engage in such extraordinary exercises of religion, and to keep days of fasting and thanksgiving by agreement.

It cannot be objected against what is proposed in the Memorial, that it would look like affecting singularity, and open distinction from others in extraordinary religion, like the Pharisees of old: because it is evident the very design of the Memorial is not to promote singularity and distinction, but as much as possible to avoid and prevent it. The end of the Memorial is not to limit the thing proposed, that it may be practised only by a few, in distinction from the generality; but on the contrary to make it as general among professing Christians as possible. Some had complied with the extraordinary duty proposed, and therein had been distinguished from others, for two years, before the Memorial was published; and they were more distinguished than they desired; and therefore sent abroad this Memorial, that the practice might be more spread, and become more general, that they might be less distinguished. What they evidently seek, is to bring to pass as general a compliance as possible of Christians of all denominations, entreating, that the desire of concurrence and assistance, contained in the Memorial, may by no means be understood as restricting to any particular denomination or party, or those who are of such or such opinions about any former instances of remarkable religious concern; but to be extended to all, who shall

vouchsafe any attention to the proposal, and have at heart the interest of vital Christianity, and the power of godliness: and who, however differing about other things, are convinced of the importance of fervent prayer, to promote that common interest, and of scripture persuasives, to promote such prayer.

SECT. III

That such agreement is premature, answered

Pessimistic belief that suffering and persecution to be endured before Christ's kingdom arrives seen as a significant hindrance to fervent prayer and hope for Christ's imminent kingdom • Interpretation that the slaying of the witnesses is a future event challenged

ANOTHER objection, very likely to arise in the minds of many against such extraordinary prayer for the speedy coming of Christ's kingdom, is, that we have no reason to expect it, till there first come a time of most extreme calamity to the church, and a prevalence of her antichristian enemies against her; even that which is represented in **Revelation 11** by the slaying of the witnesses, but have reason to determine the contrary.

It is indeed an opinion that seems pretty much to have obtained, that before the fulfilment of the promises relating to the church's latter-day glory, there must come a most terrible time, a time of extreme suffering, and dreadful persecution of the church of Christ; wherein Satan and antichrist are to obtain their greatest victory over her, and she is to be brought lower than ever by her enemies. This opinion has chiefly risen from the manner of interpreting and applying the fore-mentioned prophecy of the slaying of the witnesses; and must needs be a great hinderance, with regard to such an affair as is proposed to us in the Memorial. If persons expect no other, than that the more the glorious times of Christ's kingdom are hastened, the sooner will come this dreadful time, wherein the generality of God's people must suffer so extremely,

and the church of Christ be almost extinguished, and blotted out from under heaven; how can it be otherwise than a great damp to their hope, their courage and activity, in praying for, and reaching after the speedy introduction of those glorious promised times? As long as this opinion is retained, it will undoubtedly ever have this unhappy influence on the minds of those that wish well to Zion. It will tend to damp and keep down joyful expectation in prayer; and even in great measure to prevent all earnest, animated, and encouraged prayer, in God's people, for this mercy, at any time before it is actually fulfilled. For they who proceed on this hypothesis in their prayers, must, at the same time that they pray for this glorious day, naturally conclude within themselves, that they shall never live to see on earth any dawning of it, but only the dismal time that shall precede it; in which the far greater part of God's people who shall live till then, shall die under the extreme cruelties of their persecutors. And the more they expect that God will answer their prayers, by speedily bringing on the promised glorious day, the more must they expect themselves to have a share in those dreadful things, that nature shrinks at, and also expect to see what a renewed nature dreads: even the prevailing of God's enemies, and the almost total extinction of true religion in the world. And on this hypothesis, these discouragements are like to attend the prayers of God's people, till that dismal time be actually come: and when that is come, those who had been prophesying and praying in sackcloth, shall generally be slain: and after that time is over, then the glorious day shall immediately commence. So that this notion tends to discourage all earnest prayer in the church of God for that glorious coming of Christ's kingdom, till it be actually come; and that is to hinder its ever being at all.

This opinion being of such hurtful tendency, it is a thousand pities it should be retained, if truly there be no good ground for it. Therefore in answer to this objection, I would, with all humility and modesty, examine the foundation of that opinion, of such a dreadful time of victory of antichrist over the church, yet to be expected: and

particularly shall endeavour to show that the slaying of the witnesses, foretold, **Revelation 11:7-10**. is not an event that remains yet to be fulfilled. To this end, I would propose the following things to consideration.

1. Revelation 11:7-10 interpreted as a time of the Church's near-extinction • The unlikeliness this happening in the future

1. The time wherein the witnesses lie dead in the streets of the great city, doubtless, signifies the time wherein the true church of Christ is lowest of all, most of all prevailed against by antichrist, and nearest to an utter extinction; the time wherein there is left the least visibility of the church of Christ yet subsisting in the world, least remains of anything appertaining to true religion, whence a revival of it can be expected, and wherein all means of it are most abolished, and the state of the church is in all respects furthest from any hopes of its ever flourishing again. For before this, the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth; but now they are dead: before this, they were kept low indeed, yet there was life, and power to bring plagues on their enemies, and so much of true religion left, as to be a continual torment to them. But now their enemies rejoice and feast, have a general public triumph, as having obtained a full victory over them. They have now entirely extirpated them, are completely delivered from them, and from all that might give them any fear of being troubled with them anymore. This time, wherever it be fixed, doubtless, is the time, not only wherein fewest professors of the true religion are left in the world; but a time wherein the truth shall be farthest out of sight, and out of reach, and most forgotten; wherein there are left fewest beams of light, or traces of truth, fewest means of information, and opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the truth; and so a time of the most barbarous ignorance, most destitute of all history, monuments, and memory of things appertaining to true religion, or things the knowledge of which hath any tendency to bring truth again to light; and most destitute of learning, study, and inquiry.

Now, if we consider the present state of mankind, is it credible that a time will yet come, exceeding, in these respects, all times before the reformation? and that such a time will come before the fall of antichrist, unless we set that at a much greater distance, than the farthest that any have yet supposed? It is next to impossible, that such a change should be brought about in so short a time: it cannot be without a miracle. In order to it, not only must the popish nations so prevail, as utterly to extirpate the protestant religion through the earth; but must do many other things, far more impossible for them to effect, in order to cover the world with so gross and confirmed a darkness, and to bury all light and truth in so deep an oblivion, and so far out of all means and hopes of a revival. And not only must a vast change be made in the protestant world, but the popish nations must be strangely metamorphosed; and they themselves must be terribly persecuted by some other power, in order to bring them to such a change: nor would persecution without extirpation be sufficient for it. If there should be another universal deluge, it might be sufficient to bring things to such a pass; provided a few ignorant barbarous persons only were preserved in an ark: and it would require some catastrophe not much short of this to effect it.

2. The Reformation seen as the beginning of the downfall of antichrist • Antichrist compared to historical oppressors like ancient Babylon, Antiochus Epiphanes, and Haman • God's progressive vanquishing of antichrist to continue until the Church's complete deliverance

2. At the reformation, in the days of Luther, Calvin, and others their contemporaries, the threatened destruction of antichrist, the dreadful enemy that had long oppressed and worn out the saints, was begun. Nor was it a small beginning; for antichrist hath fallen, at least half-way to the ground, from that height of power and grandeur he was in before. Then began the vials of God's wrath to be poured out on the throne of the beast, to the great shaking of its foundations, and diminution of its extent; so that the pope lost near half of his former dominions: and as to degree of authority and

influence over what is left, he is not possessed of what he had before. God now at length, in answer to the long-continued cries of his people, awakened as one out of sleep, and began to deliver his church from her exceeding low state, under the great oppression of this grand enemy, and to restore her from her exile and bondage in the spiritual Babylon and Egypt. It is not agreeable to the analogy of God's dispensations, that after this he should desert his people, hide himself from them even more than before, leave them more than ever in the hands of their enemy; and is it credible that all this advantage of the church against antichrist should be entirely given up and lost, his power and tyranny be more confirmed, the church more entirely subdued than ever before, and further from all help and means of recovery? This is not God's way of dealing with his people, or with their enemies. His work of salvation is perfect: when he has begun such a work, he will carry it on: when he once causes the day of deliverance to dawn to his people, after such a long night of dismal darkness, he will not extinguish the light, and cause them to return again to midnight darkness. When he has begun to enkindle the blessed fire, he will not quench the smoking flax, till he hath brought forth judgment unto victory. When once the church, after her long and sore travail, has brought forth her man-child, and wrought some deliverance, her enemies shall never be able to destroy this child, though an infant; but it shall ascend up to heaven, and be set on high out of their reach.

The destruction that God often foretold and threatened to ancient Babylon (which is often referred to in the revelation, as a great type of the antichristian church) was gradually accomplished, by various steps at a great distance of time one from another. It was begun in the conquest of Cyrus; and was further accomplished by Darius, about eighteen years after, by a yet greater destruction, wherein it was brought much nearer to utter desolation; but it was about two hundred and twenty-three years after this, before the ruin of it was perfected, and the prophecies against it fully accomplished, in its being made an utter and perpetual desolation, without any human

inhabitant, becoming the dwelling-place for owls, dragons, and other doleful creatures. But yet when God had once begun to destroy her, he went on till he finished, and never suffered her any more to recover and establish her former empire. So the restitution of the Jewish church, after the Babylonish captivity, was by various steps; there were several times of return of the Jews from captivity, and several distinct decrees of the Persian emperors, for restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem, and re-establishing the Jewish church and state. It was also done in turbulent times; there were great interruptions, checks, and violent oppositions, and times wherein the enemy did much prevail. But yet when God had once begun the work, he also made an end; he never suffered the enemies of the Jews to bring Jerusalem to such a state of desolation as it had been in before, till the promised restoration was complete. Again, the deliverance of God's church from the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes, (another known type of antichrist,) was gradual; they were first assisted a little by the Maccabees; afterwards, the promised deliverance was completed in the recovery of Jerusalem, the restoration of the temple, the miserable end of Antiochus, and the consequent more full deliverance of the whole land. But after God once began to appear for the help of his church in that instance, though it had seemed dead and past all hope, he never suffered Antiochus to prevail to that degree again. The utmost strength of this great monarch was used, from time to time, in order to it, and his vast empire was engaged against a handful that opposed them; yet God never forsook the work of his own hands; when he had begun to deliver his people, he also made an end. And so Haman, that proud and inveterate enemy of the Jews, who thought to extirpate the whole nation, (who also was probably another type of antichrist,) when he began to fall before Esther and Mordecai, never stayed, till his ruin and the church's deliverance were complete; Haman's wife speaks of it as an argument of his approaching inevitable full destruction, that he "had begun to fall" (**Esther 6:13**).

3. Protestant church growth since the Reformation challenges the "two witnesses" prophecy of diminished faithful

3. If antichristian tyranny and darkness should hereafter so prevail against the protestant church—the true religion and everything appertaining to it—as to bring things to the pass fore-mentioned, this would not so properly answer the prophecy of slaying the two witnesses; for doubtless, one reason why they are called two witnesses, is, that the number of witnesses for the truth was (though sufficient yet) very small. This was remarkably the case in the dark times of popery; but since the reformation, the number of those appearing on the side of true religion has not been so small. The visible church of Christ has been vastly large, in comparison of what it was before. The number of protestants has sometimes been thought nearly equal to that of the papists; and, doubtless, the number of true saints has been far greater than before.

4. Prophecy foretells church's post-Reformation triumph over antichrist • Mr. Lowman's exegesis of revelation emphasizes diminished authority of the beast • Scripture interpreted to foretell weakening of antichrist's dominion • Historical and prophetic insights into God's protection of His church

4. It seems to be signified in prophecy, that after the reformation antichrist should never prevail against the church of Christ anymore, as he had done before. I cannot but think, that whoever reads and well considers what the learned Mr. Lowman has written on the five first vials, (**Revelation 16**) in his late exposition on **the Revelation**, must think it to be very manifest, that what is said (**v. 10**) of the pouring out of the fifth vial on the throne of the beast (for so it is in the original) is a prophecy of the reformation. Then the vial of God's wrath was poured out on the throne of the beast, i.e., according to the language of Scripture, on his authority and dominion, greatly to weaken and diminish it, both in extent and degree. But when this is represented in the prophecy, then it is added,

Revelation 16:10 and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain.

If we consider what is commonly intended by similar phrases in the Scripture, I think we shall be naturally, and as it were necessarily, led to understand those words thus: their policy, by which heretofore they have prevailed, shall now fail them; their authority shall be weakened, their dominion greatly diminished, and all their subtlety shall not avail them to support the throne of the beast, or even again to extend his authority so far as it had been before extended, and to recover what is lost. All their crafty devices to this end shall be attended with vexatious, tormenting disappointment; they who have the management of the beast's kingdom, shall henceforward grope as in the dark, and stumble, and be confounded in their purposes, plots, and enterprises. Formerly their policy was greatly successful, as a light to guide them to their ends; but now their kingdom shall be full of darkness, and their wisdom shall fail them in all their devices to subdue the church of God.

The Scripture takes notice of the great policy and subtlety of the powers that support this kingdom,

Daniel 7:8 And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man.

So it is said of Antiochus Epiphanes, that great type of antichrist,

Daniel 8:23 A king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.
Daniel 8:25 And through his policy also, shall he cause craft to prosper in his hand.

This understanding and policy is the light of this kingdom, as true wisdom is the light of the spiritual Jerusalem; and therefore, when the light fails, then may the kingdom of

this spiritual Egypt be said to be full of darkness. God henceforward will defend his people from these mystical Egyptians, as he defended Israel of old from Pharaoh and his host, when pursuing after them, by placing a cloud and darkness in their way, and so not suffering them to come nigh. He will protect his church from the men of that city that is spiritually called Sodom, as Lot's house, wherein were the angels, was defended from the men of Sodom, by their being smitten with darkness or blindness, so that they wearied themselves to find the door; and as God defended the city in which was Elisha, the prophet and witness of the Lord, from the Syrians, when they compassed it about with horses and chariots, and a great host, to apprehend him, by smiting them with blindness. The Scripture teaches us, that God is wont in this way to defend his church and people from their crafty and powerful enemies;

> **Job 5:11, &c.** To set up on high those that be low, that those which mourn may be exalted to safety: he disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise: he taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong: they meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noon-day as in the night; but he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.

(See also **Psalm 35:4, 6**.) On account of such defence of God's protestant church, with the disappointment and confusion of all the subtle devices, deep-laid schemes, and furious attempts of their antichristian enemies, to root them out, while they see them still maintaining their ground, in spite of all they do, it makes them as it were gnash their teeth, and bite their tongues for mere rage and vexation; agreeably to

> **Psalm 112:9-10** His righteousness endureth for ever, his horn shall be exalted with honour: the wicked shall see it and be grieved, and gnash with his teeth and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

Hitherto this prophecy has been very signally fulfilled; since the reformation, the kingdom of antichrist has been remarkably filled with darkness in this respect. Innumerable have been the crafty devices and great attempts of the church of Rome, wherein they have exerted their utmost policy and power, to recover their lost dominions, and again to subjugate the protestant nations—the northern heresy, as they call it. They have wearied themselves in these endeavours for more than two hundred years past; but have hitherto been disappointed and have often been strangely confounded. When their matters seemed to be brought to a degree of ripeness, and they triumphed as though their point was gained, their joy and triumph have suddenly turned into vexation and torment. How many have been their politic and powerful attempts against the protestant interest in our nation, in particular! And how wonderfully has God disappointed them from time to time! And as God has hitherto so remarkably fulfilled his word in defending his protestant church from antichrist, so I think we have ground to trust in him, that he will defend it to the end.

5. Hypothesis of future slaying of witnesses contradicted by consistent interpretation of Revelation's prophecies • Scriptures indicate church's victory, not destruction, in end times

5. The hypothesis of those who suppose that the slaying of the witnesses yet remains to be fulfilled, makes the prophecies of **the Revelation** to be inconsistent one with another. According to their hypothesis, that battle (**Revelation 11:7**) wherein the beast makes war with the witnesses, overcomes, and kills them, is the last and greatest conflict between antichrist and the church of Christ, which is to precede the utter overthrow of the antichristian kingdom. And they must suppose so; for they suppose that immediately after the sufferings the church shall endure in that war, she shall arise, and as it were ascend into heaven; i.e. as they interpret it, the church shall be directly advanced to her latter-day rest, prosperity, and glory. And consequently, this

conflict must be the same with that great battle between antichrist and the church, described **chapter 16:13, to the end**, and more largely **chapter 19:11, to the end**. For that which is described in these places, is most indisputably the greatest and last conflict between the church and her antichristian enemies; on which the utter downfall of antichrist, and the church's advancement to her latter-day glory, shall be immediately consequent. And so the earthquake that attends the resurrection of the witnesses, **chapter 11:13**. must be the same with that great earthquake described, **chapter 16:18**. And the falling of the tenth part of the city must be the same with that terrible and utter destruction of antichrist's kingdom, chapter **16:17, to the end**.

But these things cannot be. The battle, **chapter 11:7** cannot be the same with that last and great battle between the church and antichrist, described, **chapter 16 and 19**. For the things that are said of one and the other, and their issue, are in no wise consistent. In that battle, **chapter 11**. the church of God conflicts with her enemies in sorrow, sackcloth, and blood: but in the other the matter is represented exceedingly otherwise; the church goes forth to fight with antichrist, not in sackcloth and blood, but clothed in white raiment, Christ himself before them, as their captain, going forth in great pomp and magnificence, upon a

> **Revelation 19:16** white horse, and on his head many crowns, and on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

And the saints who follow so glorious a leader to this great battle, follow him on

> **Revelation 19:14** white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,

in garments of strength, joy, glory, and triumph; in the same kind of raiment that the saints appear in, when they are represented as triumphing with Christ, with palms in

their hands, (**Revelation 7:9**). And the issue of the latter of these conflicts is quite the reverse of the former. In the battle,

> **Revelation 11:7** The beast makes war with the witnesses, and overcomes them, and kills them: [the same is foretold,]
> **Daniel 7:21** I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them. [And]
> **Revelation 12:7** And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.

But in the issue of that last and great battle, which the church shall have with her antichristian enemies, the church shall

> **Revelation 11:7** OVERCOME THEM, AND KILL THEM;
> **Revelation 17:14** These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful.

In the conflict that the beast shall have with the witnesses, the beast kills them, and their dead bodies lie unburied (**Revelation 17:7-9**); as though they were to be meat for the beasts of the earth, and fowls of heaven: but in the last battle, it is represented that Christ and his church shall slay their enemies and give their dead bodies to be meat for the fowls of heaven (**Revelation 19:17, &c.**). There is no appearance, in the descriptions given of that last great battle, of any advantages gained in it by the enemies of the church, before they themselves are overcome, but all appearance of the contrary. The descriptions in **the 16th and 19th chapters of the Revelation** will by means allow of such an advantage, as overcoming God's people, and slaying them; their lying dead for some time, and unburied, that their dead bodies may be for their enemies to abuse, trample on, and make sport with. In **Revelation 16** we read of their

being gathered together against the church, a mighty host, into the place called Armageddon; and then the first thing we hear of, is, the pouring out of the seventh vial of God's wrath, and a voice saying, "It is done." And so in **Revelation 19** we have an account of the

> **Revelation 19:19** beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, being gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

And then the next thing we hear of, is, that the

> **Revelation 19:20-21** beast is taken, and with him the false prophet; and that these are both cast alive into the lake of fire; and that the remnant of their vast army are slain, and all the fowls filled with their flesh.

The issue of the conflict of the beast with the witnesses, in the triumph of the church's enemies over God's people, looking on them as entirely vanquished, and their interest utterly ruined, past all recovery;

> **Revelation 11:10** they that dwell on the earth shall see the dead bodies of the saints lying in the streets of the great city, and shall rejoice over them and make merry, and send gifts one to another.

But the issue of that great and last battle is quite the reverse; it is the church's triumph over her enemies, as being utterly and for ever destroyed.

Upon the whole, I think there appears to be no reason from the prophecy concerning the two witnesses, **Revelation 11** to expect any such general and terrible destruction of the church of Christ, before the utter downfall of antichrist, as some have supposed; but good reason to determine the contrary. It is true, there is abundant evidence in Scripture, that there is yet remaining a mighty conflict between the church

and her enemies—the most violent struggle of Satan and his adherents in opposition to true religion, and the most general commotion that ever was in the world, since the foundation of it to that time—and many particular Christians may suffer hard things in this conflict. But in the general, Satan and antichrist shall not get the victory, nor greatly prevail; on the contrary, they shall be entirely conquered, and utterly overthrown, in this great battle. So that I hope this prophecy of the slaying of the witnesses, will not stand in the way of a compliance with the proposal made to us in the Memorial, as a prevalent objection and discouragement.

SECT. IV

That the fall of antichrist is at a great distance, answered

The timing of antichrist's reign

Debate over antichrist's reign • Lowman's 1260-year theory questioned • Scholars dispute timing of Christ's kingdom in Revelation • Timeline uncertainty in Old Testament biblical Prophets and Revelation • The role of prayer and prophecy in predicting the apocalypse

A VERY learned and ingenious expositor of **the Revelation**, Mr. Lowman, sets the fall of antichrist, and consequently the coming of Christ's kingdom, at a great distance; supposing that the twelve hundred and sixty years of antichrist's reign did not begin till the year seven hundred and fifty-six; and consequently, that it will not end till after the year two thousand; and this opinion he confirms by a great variety of arguments.

If this objection be allowed to be valid, and that which ought to determine persons in an affair of this nature, in connexion with the duty before proved, then the following things must be supposed; viz. That it is the will of God his people be much in prayer for this event; and particularly, that a little before its accomplishment his people be earnestly seeking, and importunately crying to God for it; but yet that it was God's

design, before this time of extraordinary prayer and importunity, his church should understand precisely when the appointed time should be; and that accordingly he has now actually brought the fixed time to light, by means of Mr. Lowman. But is it reasonable to suppose, that this should be God's manner of dealing with his church; first to make known to them the precise time which he has unalterably fixed for showing this mercy to Zion, and then make it the duty of his church, in an extraordinary manner, to be by prayer inquiring of him concerning it, and saying, "How long, Lord!" that he would come quickly, hide himself no longer, have mercy upon Zion, awake as one out of sleep, openly manifest himself, and make bare his holy arm for the salvation of his people? That

> **Isaiah 62:6-7** they who make mention of the Lord should not keep silence, nor give him any rest, till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth?"

And that the church should then say to Christ,

> **Song 8:14** Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart on the mountain of spices?

It may be many ways for the comfort and benefit of God's church in her afflicted state, to know that the reign of antichrist is to be no more than one thousand two hundred and sixty years; and some things in general may be argued concerning the approach of it, when it is near: as the Jews could argue the approach of Christ's first coming, from Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks, though they knew not precisely when that seventy weeks would end. But it is not reasonable to expect that God should make known to us beforehand the precise time of Christ's coming in his kingdom. The disciples desired to know this, and manifested their desire to their Lord; but he told them plainly, that

> **Acts 1:7** it was not for them to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power;

and there is no reason to think that it is any more for us than for them; or for Christ's disciples in these days any more than for his apostles in those days. God makes it the duty of his church to be importunately praying for it, and praying that it may come speedily; and not only to be praying for it, but to be seeking for it, in the use of proper means; endeavouring that religion may now revive everywhere, and Satan's kingdom be overthrown; and always to be waiting for it, being in a constant preparation for it, as servants that wait for the coming of their Lord, or virgins for the coming of the bridegroom, not knowing at what hour he will come. But God's making known beforehand the precise time of his coming, does not well consist with these things.

It is the revealed will of God, that he should be inquired of by his people, by extraordinary prayer, concerning this great mercy, to do it for them, before it be fulfilled. And if any suppose that it is now found out precisely when the time is to be, and (the time being at a considerable distance) that now is not a proper season to begin this extraordinary prayer, I would, on this supposition, ask, when we shall begin? How long before the fixed and known time of the bestowment of this mercy comes, shall we begin to cry earnestly to God that this mercy may come, and that Christ would make haste and be like a roe, &c. For us to delay, supposing that we know the time to be far off, is not agreeable to the language of God's people in my text,

> **Zechariah 8:21** Come, let us go speedily, and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts.

I acknowledge that Mr. Lowman's Exposition of **the Revelation** is, on many accounts, excellently written, giving great light into some parts of that prophecy; and

especially his interpretation of the five first vials; yet his opinion with respect to the time, times, and half a time of antichrist's reign, is the less to be regarded, because it is expressly declared it should be sealed up and hid, and not known till the time of the end of this period. **Daniel, in the last chapter of his prophecy**, gives us an account, how the angel told him of a future time of great trouble and affliction to the church of God, and then said to him,

> **Daniel 12:4** But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.

And then the prophet proceeds to give an account of a vision he had of one earnestly inquiring of the angel of the Lord how long it would be to the end of this remarkable time of the church's trouble, saying,

> **Daniel 12:6** How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? [The answer was]
> **Daniel 12:7** that it should be for a time, times, and an half;

and that when so long a time was past, then this wonderful affliction and scattering of the holy people should be finished, **v. 7**. But then Daniel tells us, in the next verse, that he

> **Daniel 12: 8** heard, but he understood not, then said, "O, my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"

He did not understand that general and mystical answer, that those things should have an end at the end of "a time, times, and an half;" he did not know by it, when this period would have an end: and therefore he inquires more particularly what the time of the end was. But the angel replies,

> **Daniel 12:9** Go thy way, Daniel, the words are closed and sealed up, till the time of the end.

I do not know what could have been more express. The angel gently rebukes this over-inquisitiveness of Daniel, very much as Christ did a like inquisitiveness of the disciples concerning the same matter, when he said to them,

> **Acts 1:7** It is not for you to know the times and seasons, that the Father hath put in his own power.

I think there can be no doubt but that this space of the church's great trouble, about the end of which Daniel inquires, is the same with what is spoken of, **Daniel 7:25** and **Revelation 12:14** as the time of antichrist's reign, and the church's being in the wilderness; and not merely the time of the church's troubles by Antiochus Epiphanes. But we see, when Daniel has a mind to know particularly when this time would come to an end, he is bid to go away, and rest contented in ignorance of this matter: for, says the man clothed in linen, the words are closed up, and sealed, till the time of the end. That is, very plainly, the matter that you inquire about, shall not be known, but kept a great secret, till the time of the end actually comes, and all attempts to find it out before shall be in vain. And therefore when a particular divine appears, who thinks he has found it out, and has unsealed this matter, we may well think he is mistaken!

Questioning Lowman's interpretations

Challenging Lowman's distant timeline for antichrist's fall • Debate over imminence of antichrist's demise in biblical prophecy • Questioning Lowman's interpretation of Revelation's beast • Closer timeline for antichrist's end proposed

Though it is not for us to know the precise time of the fall of antichrist, yet I humbly conceive that we have no reason to suppose the event principally intended in the

prophecies of antichrist's destruction to be at so great a distance, as Mr. Lowman places it; but have reason to think it to be much nearer. Not that I would set up myself as a person of equal judgment with Mr. Lowman in matters of this nature. As he differs from most other approved expositors of the Apocalypse in this matter; so I hope it will not appear vanity and presumption in me to differ from this particular expositor, and to agree with the greater number. And since his opinion stands so much in the way of that great and important affair, to promote which is the very end of this whole discourse, I hope it will not look as though I affected to appear considerable among the interpreters of prophecy, and as a person of skill in these mysterious matters, when I offer some reasons against Mr. Lowman's opinion. It is surely great pity that it should be received as a thing clear and abundantly confirmed, that the glorious day of antichrist's fall is at so great a distance, so directly tending to discourage all earnest endeavours after its speedy accomplishment, unless there be good and plain ground for it. I would therefore offer some things to consideration, which I think may justly make us look upon the opinion of this learned interpreter not so indubitable, as to hinder our praying and hoping for its being fulfilled much sooner.

The period of antichrist's reign, as this author has fixed it, seems to be the main point insisted on in his Exposition of the Revelation, which he supposes a great many things in the scheme of prophecies delivered in that book concur to establish. But there are several things in that scheme which appear to me justly liable to exception.

Whereas it is represented, **Revelation 17:10-11** that there are seven different successive heads of the beast; that five were past, and another was to come, and to continue a short space, that might on some accounts be reckoned a seventh; and that antichrist was to follow next after this, as the eighth; but yet the foregoing not being properly one of the heads of the beast, he was properly the seventh. Mr. Lowman

does not think with others, that by the seventh that was to continue a short space, which would not be properly one of the heads of the beast, is meant Constantine, and the other Christian emperors; for he thinks they are reckoned as properly belonging to the sixth head of the beast; but that hereby is intended the government of Rome under the Gothic princes, and the exarchate of Ravenna, after the imperial form of government in Rome ceased in Augustulus, till the pope was invested with his temporal dominion, called St. Peter's patrimony, by Pepin king of France, in the year 756. And he supposes that the wounding of one of the heads of the beast with a sword of death, **Revelation 13:3-14** was not fulfilled in the destruction of the heathen empire, and the giving of the imperial power unto Christians, but in the destruction of the imperial form of government by the sword of the Goths, in the time of Augustulus. But it seems to me to be very unlikely, that the Spirit of God should reckon Constantine and the Christian emperors as proper members, and belonging to one of the heads of that monstrous wild and cruel beast, compared to a leopard, a bear, and a devouring lion, that had a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and that rules by the power and authority of the dragon, or the devil; which beast is represented in this 17th chapter, as full of names of blasphemy, and of a bloody colour, denoting his cruelty in persecuting the Christian church. For Constantine, instead of this, was a member of the Christian church, set by God in the most eminent station in his church; and was honoured, above all other princes that ever had been in the world, as the great protector of his church, and her deliverer from the persecuting power of that cruel, scarlet-coloured beast. Mr. Lowman himself styles him a Christian prince, and protector of the Christian religion. God is very careful not to reckon his own people among the Gentiles, the visible subjects of Satan,

Numbers 23:9 The people shall not be reckoned among the nations.

Constantine's impact and the beast imagery in Revelation

Arguments against distant timeline for antichrist's fall • Dispute over interpretation of Revelation's beast and Constantine's role • Reinterpretation of biblical prophecy suggests nearer end of antichrist • New insights challenge established end times views

If they happen to be among them, he will be careful to set a mark upon them, as a note of distinction; **Revelation 7:3, &c.** when God is reckoning up his own people, he leaves out those that have been noted for idolatry. As among the tribes that were sealed, **Revelation 8**, those idolatrous tribes of Ephraim and Dan are left out, and in the genealogy of Christ, **Matthew 1**, those princes that were chiefly noted for idolatry are left out. Much more would God be careful not to reckon his own people, especially such Christian princes as have been the most eminent instruments of overthrowing idolatry, amongst idolaters: and as members and heads of that kingdom that is noted in Scripture as the most notorious and infamous of all, for abominable idolatry, opposition and cruelty to the true worshippers of God. And especially not to reckon them as properly belonging to one of those seven heads of this monarchy, of which very heads it is particularly noted that they had on them the names of blasphemy; (**Revelation 13:1**) which Mr. Lowman himself supposes to signify idolatry.

It was therefore worthy of God, agreeable to his manner, and might well be expected, that when he was reckoning up the several successive heads of this beast, and Constantine and his successors came in the way, and there was occasion to mention them, to set a mark, or note of distinction, on them, signifying that they did not properly belong to the beast, nor were to be reckoned as belonging to the heads; and therefore are to be skipped over in the reckoning; and antichrist, though the eighth head of the Roman empire, is to be reckoned the seventh head of the beast. This appears to me abundantly the most just and natural interpretation of **Revelation**

17:10-11. It is reasonable to suppose that God would take care to make such a note in this prophetical description of this dreadful beast, and not by any means to reckon Constantine as belonging properly to him. If we reckon Constantine as a member of this beast having seven heads and ten horns, described **Revelation 17** and as properly one of his heads, then he was also properly a member of the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns (**Revelation 12:3**), that warred with the woman, (**Revelation 12:17**). For the seven heads and ten horns of that dragon are plainly the same with the seven heads and ten horns of the beast. So that this makes Constantine a visible member of the devil; for we are told expressly of that dragon, that he was that old serpent, called the devil and Satan (**Revelation 12:9**). And to suppose that Constantine is reckoned as belonging to one of the heads of that dragon, is to make these prophecies inconsistent with themselves. For in **the 12th chapter**, we have represented a war between the dragon and the woman clothed with the sun; which woman, as all agree, is the church; but Constantine, as all do also agree, belonged to the woman, was a member of the Christian church, and was on that side in the war against the dragon; yea, was the main instrument of that great victory obtained over the dragon (**Revelation 12:9-12**). What an inconsistency therefore is it, to suppose that he was at the same time a member and head of that very dragon which fought with the woman, and yet which Constantine himself fought with, overcame, and gloriously triumphed over! It is not therefore to be wondered at, that God was careful to distinguish Constantine from the proper heads of the beast: it would have been a wonder if he had not. God seems to have been careful to distinguish him, not only in his word, but in his providence, by so ordering it that this Christian emperor should be removed from Rome, the city which God had given up to the seat of the power of the beast and of its heads, and that he should have the seat of his empire elsewhere.

Constantine was the instrument of giving a mortal wound to the heathen Roman empire; and giving it a mortal wound in its head, viz. the heathen emperors then

reigning, Maxentius and Licinius. But more eminently was this glorious change in the empire owing to the power of God's word, the prevalence of the glorious gospel, by which Constantine himself was converted, and so became the instrument of the overthrow of the heathen empire in the east and west. The change that was then brought to pass, is represented as the destruction of the heathen empire, or the old heathen world; and therefore seems to be compared to that dissolution of heaven and earth that shall be at the day of judgment. (**Revelation 6:12, &c.**) And therefore well might the heathen empire under the head which was then reigning, be represented as wounded to death, (**Revelation 13:3**). It is much more likely, that the wound the beast had by a sword in his head, (**Revelation 13:14**), was the wound the heathen empire had in its head by that sword which, **Revelation 1:16.** and **19:15**, proceeds out of the mouth of Christ, than the wound that was given to the Christian empire and emperor by the sword of the heathen Goths. It is most likely that this deadly wound was by that sword with which Michael made war with him, and overcame him, and cast him to the earth, **Revelation 12:9**, and that the deadly wound was given him at that very time. It is most likely, that the sword which gave him this deadly wound, after which he strangely revived, as though he rose from the dead, was the same sword with that which shall at last utterly destroy him, so that he shall never rise more, **Revelation 19:15, 20-21**. This wounding of the head of the beast by the destruction of the heathen empire, and conversion of the emperor to the Christian truth, was a glorious event indeed of divine providence, worthy to be so much spoken of in prophecy. It is natural to suppose, that the mortal wounding of the head of that savage cruel beast, represented as constantly at war with the woman, and persecuting the church of Christ, should be some relief to the Christian church; but on the contrary, that wounding to death, that Mr. Lowman speaks of, was the victory of the enemies of the Christian church over her, and the wound received from them.

It is said of that head of the empire that shall be next after the sixth head, and next before antichrist, and that is not reckoned as properly one of the number of the heads of the beast, that "when it comes, it shall continue a short space." **Revelation 17:10**. By which we may understand, at least, that it shall be one of the shortest, in its continuance, of the successive heads. But the government seated at Ravenna, in the hands of the Goths, or of the deputies of the Greek emperors, (which Mr. Lowman supposes to be meant by the head,) continued, as Mr. Lowman himself takes notice, very near three hundred years. And if so, its continuance was one of the longest of the heads mentioned.

Besides, if the government Rome was under, from the time that Augustulus abdicated to the time when the pope was confirmed in his temporal dominion, was meant by the seventh head that was to be between the imperial head and the papal, there would doubtless have been two different heads mentioned, instead of one, between the emperor and the pope; viz. First, the Gothic princes, who reigned near one hundred years. Secondly, the exarchs of Ravenna, who governed for about one hundred and eighty-five years. The Gothic kingdom was much more properly a distinct government from the imperial, than the exarchate of Ravenna. For during the exarchate, Rome was under the government of the emperor, as much as it was in Constantine's time.

In **Revelation 17:12** it is said, the "ten horns are ten kings, which are to receive power as kings one hour with the beast," or (as Mr. Lowman says it ought to have been translated) the same hour or point of time with the beast. This will not allow the time when antichrist first receives power as king, to be so late as Mr. Lowman supposes. This division of the empire into many kingdoms, denoted by the number ten, was about the year four hundred and fifty-six, after Genesericus had taken the city of Rome: but Mr. Lowman places the beginning of the reign of antichrist in the year

seven hundred and fifty-six, which is three hundred years later. I know, such an expression as in one hour, or the same hour, may allow of some latitude; but surely not such a latitude as this. This is a much longer time than it was from the time of the vision to Constantine; much longer than the space of all the first six seals; longer than it was from Christ's ascension to Constantine; and near as long as the time of all the reigns of the heathen emperors put together, from Augustus Cæsar to Constantine. An hour is everywhere else in this book used to signify a very short time, as may be seen in places cited in the margin. And the expression, "the same hour," everywhere else in the Bible, intends near the same point of time. The phrase one hour is used several times in the next chapter, speaking of the downfall of antichrist; and in each evidently signifies a very short space of time. And there is no reason why we should not understand the same phrase in the same sense, when used here concerning the rise of antichrist.

However, I do not deny that the time when Mr. Lowman supposes the reign of the beast began, even the time when Pepin confirmed to the pope his temporal dominions in Italy, was a time of the great increase and advancement of the power of antichrist in the world, and a notable epoch. And if I may be allowed humbly to offer what appears to me to be the truth with relation to the rise and fall of antichrist; it is this:—As the power of antichrist, and the corruption of the apostate church, rose not at once, but by SEVERAL NOTABLE STEPS and degrees; so it will IN THE LIKE MANNER FALL: and, the DIVERS STEPS and SEASONS OF DESTRUCTION to the spiritual Babylon, and revival of the true church, are prophesied of under ONE. And yet it may be true, that there is some particular event, which prevails above all others in the intention of the prophecy, some remarkable season of the destruction of the church of Rome, the papal power and corruption, and advancement of true religion!

There are, as I apprehend, good reasons to hope, that the work of God's Holy Spirit which in its progress will overthrow the kingdom of antichrist, and in its issue destroy Satan's visible kingdom on earth, will begin in a like time. The prophecy of the 6th vial, **Revelation 16:12-16**, if we take it in its connexion with the other vials, and consider those providential events by which the preceding vials have manifestly been fulfilled, I humbly conceive, affords just ground for such a hope.

It is very plain, from this whole chapter, as also the preceding and following, that all these seven vials are vials of God's wrath on antichrist; one is not poured out on the Jews, another on the Turks, another on pagans, another on the church of Rome; but they all signify God's successive judgments or plagues on the beast and his kingdom, which is in this chapter, and almost everywhere in this book, called GREAT BABYLON. And therefore undoubtedly, when it is said,

> **Revelation 16:12** The sixth angel poured out his vial on the river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared;

by the river Euphrates is meant something some way appertaining to this mystical Babylon; as the river Euphrates appertained to the literal Babylon. And it is very manifest, that in the prophecy of this vial there is an allusion to that by which the way was prepared for the destruction of Babylon by Cyrus. This was done by turning the channel of the river Euphrates, which ran through the midst of the city. Hereby the way of the kings of the east, the princes of Media and Persia, was prepared to come in, under the walls of the city, at each end, and to destroy it; as they did that night wherein Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall, against Belshazzar, **Daniel 5:30**.

The prophecies of Babylon's destruction, from time to time, take notice of this way of destroying her, by drying up the waters of the river Euphrates, to prepare the way for her enemies;

> **Isaiah 44:27-28** That saith to the deep, "Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers;" that saith of Cyrus, "He is my servant, and shall perform all my pleasure."
> **Jeremiah 51:31-32** One post shall run to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, and that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. [And]
> **Jeremiah 51:36** I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry."

The Medes and Persians, the people that destroyed Babylon, dwelt to the eastward of Babylon, and are spoken of as coming from the east to her destruction;

> **Isaiah 46:11** Calling a ravenous bird from the east; the man that executeth my counsel, from a far country.

And the princes that joined with this ravenous bird from the east, in this affair of destroying Babylon, are called kings,

> **Jeremiah 51:11** The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; for his device is against Babylon to destroy it.
> **Jeremiah 51:28** Prepare against her the nations, with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and the rulers thereof.

Symbolism of rivers in prophetic imagery

Final stages of mystical Babylon's fall linked to Euphrates' drying • Revelation: Euphrates symbolizes financial decline of antichristian forces • Prophecy suggests imminent overthrow of antichristian kingdom • Spiritual warfare escalates as prophetic “sixth vial” nears completion, signalling antichrist's end

The drying of the channel of the river Euphrates, to prepare the way for these kings and captains of the east, to enter into that city, under its high walls, was the last thing done by the besiegers of Babylon, before her actual destruction. In like manner, the sixth is the last vial but one of God’s wrath on the mystical Babylon; and the effect of it is the drying up of the channel, the last thing done against it before its actual destruction by the seventh vial. This opens the way for those who fight in a spiritual war against it, speedily to bring on its ruin.

Hence I think it may without dispute be determined, that by the river Euphrates in the prophecy of this vial, is meant something appertaining to the mystical Babylon, or the antichristian church and kingdom, that serves it, in a way answerable to that in which the river Euphrates served old Babylon, and the removal of which will in like manner prepare the way for the enemies to destroy her. And therefore what we have to do in the first place, in order to find out what is intended by the river Euphrates in this prophecy, is to consider how the literal Euphrates served old Babylon. And it may be noted, that Euphrates was of remarkable benefit to that city in two respects: it served the city as a supply; it was let through the midst of the city by an artificial canal, and ran through the midst of the palace of the king of Babylon; that part of his palace called the old palace, standing on one side, and the other part called the new palace, on the other; with communications from one part to another, above the waters, by a bridge, and under the waters, by a vaulted or arched passage; that the city, and especially the palace, might be plentifully supplied with water. Another way that the waters of Euphrates served Babylon, was as an impediment and obstacle in the way of

its enemies, to hinder their access to destroy it. For there was a vast moat round the city, without the walls, of prodigious width and depth, filled with the water of the river, to hinder the access of her besiegers: and at each end of the city, the river served instead of walls. And therefore when Cyrus had dried up the river, the moat was emptied, and the channel of the river under the walls left dry; and so his way was prepared.

Therefore it is natural to suppose, that by drying up the waters of the river Euphrates, in the prophecy of the destruction of the new Babylon, to prepare the way of her enemies, is meant the drying up her incomes and supplies; and the removal of those things which hitherto have been the chief obstacles in the way of those who in this book are represented as at war with her, and seeking her destruction; (**Revelation 19:11, to the end,** and **chapter 12:7**) those things which have hindered their progress and success, or have been the chief impediments in the way of the protestant religion. The first thing is the drying of the streams of wealth, the temporal supplies, revenues, and vast incomes of the Romish church, and the riches of the popish dominions. Waters in scripture language very often signify provision and supplies, both temporal and spiritual. The temporal supplies of a people are very often in Scripture called waters; as

> **Isaiah 5:13** Therefore my people is gone into captivity, and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst,

i.e. deprived of the supports and supplies of life. And the drying up of the waters of a city or kingdom, is often used in scripture prophecy for depriving them of their wealth, as the Scripture explains itself,

> **Hosea 13:15** His spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up; he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

> **Isaiah 15:6-7** The waters of Nimrim shall be desolate; for the hay is withered; the grass faileth; there is no green thing. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows.

The brook of the willows seems to refer to the waters of Assyria or Chaldea, whose streams abounded with willows. (Compare **Psalm 137:2**.) So that the carrying away of the treasures of Moab, and the adding of them to the treasures of Assyria, is here represented by the figure of turning away the waters of Nimrim from the country of Moab, and adding them to the waters of Assyria, as the prophecy explains itself. Yea, even in the prophecies of the destruction of Babylon itself, the depriving her of her treasures, seems to be one thing intended by the drying up of her waters. This seems manifest by the words of the prophecy in

> **Jeremiah 50:37-38** A sword is upon her treasures, and they shall be robbed; a drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up. [Compared with]
> **Jeremiah 51:13** O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures: [with]
> **Jeremiah 51:36** I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry.

The wealth, revenues, and vast incomes of the church of Rome, are the waters by which that Babylon has been nourished and supported; these are the waters which the popish clergy and members of the Romish hierarchy thirst after, and are continually drinking down, with insatiable appetite; and they are waters that have been flowing into that spiritual city like a great river; ecclesiastical persons possessing a very great part of the popish dominions. Accordingly, this Babylon is represented as vastly rich, in the prophecy of **the Apocalypse**, especially in **the 17th and 18th chapters**. These are especially the waters that supply the palace of the king of this new Babylon, viz. the pope; as the river Euphrates ran through the midst of the palace of the king of old

Babylon. The revenues of the pope have been like waters of a great river, coming into his palace, from innumerable fountains, and by innumerable lesser streams, coming from many various and distant countries.

This prophecy represents to us two cities very contrary the one to the other: viz. New Babylon and the New Jerusalem, and a river running through the midst of each. The New Jerusalem, which signifies the church of Christ, especially in her best estate, is described as having "a river running through the midst of it," (**Revelation 22:1-2**). This river, as might easily be made most evident, by comparing this with abundance of other scriptures, undoubtedly signifies the divine supplies; the rich and abundant spiritual incomes and provision of that holy city. Mr. Lowman, in his Exposition, says, It represents a constant PROVISION for the comfortable and happy life of all the inhabitants of this city of God. And in his notes on the same place, he observes as follows: "Water (says he), as necessary to the support of life, and as it contributes in great cities, especially in hot eastern countries, to the ornament of the place, and delight of the inhabitants, is a very proper representation of the enjoyment of all things, both for the support and pleasure of life." As the river that runs through the new Jerusalem, the church of Christ, refreshing that holy spiritual society, signifies their spiritual supplies, to satisfy their spiritual thirst; so the river that runs through the new Babylon, the antichristian church, that wicked carnal society, signifies, according to the opposite character of the city, her worldly, carnal supplies, to satisfy their carnal desires and thirstings.

The new Jerusalem is called in this book the Paradise of God; and therefore is represented as having the tree of life growing in it, **chapter 2:7. and 22:2**. And it being described, as though a river ran through the midst of it, there seems to be some allusion to the ancient paradise in Eden, of which we are told that there ran a river through the midst of it to water it; (**Genesis 2:10**), i.e., to supply the plants of it with

nourishment. And this river was this very same river Euphrates, which afterwards ran through Babylon. And in one and the other, it represented the divers supplies of two opposite cities. In Eden, it represented the spiritual supplies and wealth of the true Christian church, in her spiritual advancement and glory; (**Revelation 22:1-2**). In the other, it represented the outward carnal supplies of the false antichristian church, in her worldly pomp and vain glory.

When the waters that supply this mystical Babylon come to be dried up in this sense, it will prepare the way for the enemies of antichristian corruption, that seek her overthrow. The wealth of the church of Rome, and of the powers that support it, is very much its defence. After the streams of her revenues and riches are dried up, or very greatly diminished, her walls will be as it were broken down, and she will become weak and defenceless, and exposed to easy ruin.

As the river Euphrates served the city Babylon for supply; so, as before observed, it served as an impediment or obstacle to hinder the access of its enemies: for there was a vast moat round the city, filled with the water of the river, which was left empty when Euphrates was dried up. And therefore, we may suppose, that another thing meant by the effect of the sixth vial, is the removal of those things which hitherto have been the chief obstacles to the progress of true religion, and the victory of the church of Christ over her enemies. These have been the corrupt doctrines and practices which have prevailed in protestant countries, the doubts and difficulties that attend many doctrines of the true religion, and the many divisions and contentions that subsist among protestants. The removal of those would wonderfully prepare the way for Christ and his armies to go forward and prevail against their enemies, in a glorious propagation of true religion. So that this vial, which is to prepare the way for Christ and his people, seems to have respect to that remarkable preparing of the way for Christ, by levelling mountains, exalting valleys, drying up rivers, and removing

stumbling-blocks, which is often spoken of in the prophecies, as what shall next precede the church's latter-day glory; as

> **Isaiah 42:13-16** The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man; he shall stir up jealousy as a man of war; he shall prevail against his enemies. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools; and I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, and I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.
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> **Isaiah 40:3-5** Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God: every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.
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> **Isaiah 11:15-16** And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams thereof, and make men go over dry-shod: and there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people which shall be left from Assyria, like as it was to Israel, in the day that he came out of the land of Egypt.
>
> **Isaiah 57:14** Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people. [And]
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> **Isaiah 62:10** Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.
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> **Zechariah 10:10-12** I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the

sea with affliction and shall smite the waves of the sea; and all the deeps of the river shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away: and I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.

And it is worthy to be remarked, that as Cyrus destroying Babylon, letting go God's captives from thence, and restoring Jerusalem, is certainly typical of Christ's destroying mystical Babylon, delivering his people from her tyranny, and gloriously building up the spiritual Jerusalem in the latter days; so God preparing Cyrus's way, by drying up the river Euphrates, is spoken in similar terms, to signify the preparing of Christ's way, when he shall come to accomplish the latter event. Thus God says concerning Cyrus,

Isaiah 45:2 I will go before thee and make crooked places straight. [And]
Isaiah 45:13, I will direct, [or make straight, as it is in the margin,] all his ways. [This is like]
Isaiah 40:3 Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Isaiah 40:4 The crooked things shall be made straight.
Isaiah 42:16 I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.

It is true, we do not know how long this vial may continue running, and so Christ's way preparing, before it is fully prepared: but yet, if there be reason to think the effect of this vial is begun, or is near, then there is reason also to think that the beginning of that great work of God's Spirit, in the revival of religion, which, before it is finished, will issue in antichrist's ruin, is not far off. For it is pretty manifest, that the beginning of this work will accompany the sixth vial. For the gathering together of the armies on both sides, on the side of Christ and antichrist, to that great battle that shall issue in

the overthrow of the latter, will be under this vial; compare **Revelation 16:12, 13, 14**, with **chapter 19:11, to the end**. And it is plain, that Christ manifesting himself, wonderfully appearing, after long hiding himself, to plead his own and his people's cause, and riding forth against his enemies in a glorious manner—and his people following him in pure linen, or the practice of righteousness and pure religion—will be the alarm to antichrist and cause him to gather that vast host to make the utmost opposition. But this alarm and gathering together is represented as being under the sixth vial. So that it will be a great revival, and a mighty progress of true religion under the sixth vial, eminently threatening the speedy and utter overthrow of Satan's kingdom on earth, that will so mightily rouse the old serpent to exert himself with such exceeding violence, in that greatest conflict and struggle that ever he had with Christ and the church, since the world stood.

Interpreting vials of wrath; anticipating spiritual revival

Antichrist's downfall and religion's revival linked final vials • Sixth vial signals imminent spiritual awakening and decline of antichrist • Prophecies foretell wealth shift to protestant church • Steadfast prayer for revival urged, regardless of antichrist's timeline

All the seven vials bring terrible judgments upon antichrist, but there seems to be something distinguishing in the three last, the fifth, sixth, and seventh, viz. That they more directly tend to overthrow his kingdom; and accordingly, each of them is attended with a great reviving of religion. The fifth vial was attended with such a revival and reformation, as greatly weakened and diminished the throne or kingdom of the beast and went far towards its ruin. It seems as though the sixth vial should be much more so; for it is the distinguishing note of this vial that it is the preparatory, which more than any other vial prepares the way for Christ's coming to destroy the kingdom of antichrist, and to set up his own kingdom in the world.

Besides, those things which belong to the preparation of Christ's way, so often represented by levelling mountains, drying up rivers, &c. viz. Unravelling intricacies, and removing difficulties attending Christian doctrines; distinguishing between true religion and its false appearances; detecting and exploring errors and corrupt principles; reforming the wicked lives of professors, which have been the chief stumbling-blocks and obstacles that have hitherto hindered the progress of true religion: these things are the proper work of the Spirit of God, promoting and advancing divine light and true piety, and can be the effect of nothing else.

And that the beginning of that glorious work of God's Spirit, which shall finally bring on the church's latter-day glory, will accompany that other effect of this vial—turning the streams of the wealth of the world, bringing its treasures, and the gains of its trade and navigation, into the true protestant church of Christ—seems very manifest, because this very effect is spoken of as that which shall be at the beginning of this glorious work.

> **Isaiah 60:8-9** Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

So that it is to be hoped, that before this effect, now probably begun, is at an end, the Spirit of God will so influence the hearts of the protestants, that they will be disposed to devote to the service of God the silver and gold they take from their popish enemies, and the gains of their trade and navigation, both to the East and West Indies, so that their merchandise and hire shall be holiness to the Lord.

Agreeably to what has been supposed, that an extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit of God is to accompany this sixth vial; so the beginning of a work of extraordinary

awakening has already attended the probable beginning of it, continued in one place or other for many years past: although it has been, in some places, mingled with much enthusiasm, after the manner of things in their first beginnings, unripe, and mixed with much crudity. But it is to be hoped a far more pure, extensive, and glorious revival of religion is not far off, which will more properly be the beginning of that work which in its issue shall overthrow the kingdom of antichrist and of Satan through the world. But God will be inquired of for this, by the house of Israel, to do it for them.

If, notwithstanding all I have said, it be still judged there is sufficient reason to determine, that the ruin of antichrist is at a very great distance; and if all I have said—as arguing that the beginning of that glorious revival of religion, which in its continuance and progress will destroy the kingdom of antichrist, is not very far off—be judged to be of no force; yet it will not follow, that our complying with what is proposed to us in the late Memorial from Scotland, will be in vain, or not followed with such spiritual blessings, as will richly recompense the pains of such extraordinary prayer for the Holy Spirit, and the revival of religion. If God does not grant that greatest of all effusions of his Spirit, so soon as we desire; yet we shall have the conscious satisfaction of having employed ourselves in a manner that is certainly agreeable to Christ's will and frequent commands—in being much in prayer for this mercy, much more than has heretofore been common with Christians—and there will be all reason to hope, that we shall receive some blessed token of his acceptance. If the fall of mystical Babylon, and the work of God's Spirit that shall bring it to pass, be at several hundred years' distance; yet it follows not that there will be no happy revivals of religion before that time, which shall be richly worth the most diligent, earnest, and constant prayer.

SECT. V

The charge of novelty, answered

Historical precedent for united prayer • Recent memorial draws from past successes • Nationwide call for prayer reflects historical Christian practice • Extraordinary united prayer a time-tested tradition in times of crisis • Memorial urges renewed commitment to collective prayer, echoing past movements

I WOULD say something to one objection more, and then hasten to the conclusion of this discourse. Some may be ready to object, that what is proposed in this Memorial is a new thing, such as never was put in practice in the church of God before.

If there be something circumstantially new in it, this cannot be a sufficient objection. The duty of prayer is no new duty. For many of God's people expressly to agree, as touching something they shall ask in prayer, is no new thing. For God's people to agree on circumstances of time and place for united prayer, according to their own discretion, is no new thing. For many, in different places, to agree to offer up extraordinary prayers to God, at the same time, as a token of their union, is no new thing; but has been commonly practised in the appointment of days of fasting and prayer for special mercies. And if the people of God should engage in the duty of prayer for the coming of Christ's kingdom, in a new manner—that they resolve not to be so negligent in this duty, as has been common with professors of religion heretofore, but will be more frequent and fervent in it—this would be such a new thing as ought to be, and would be only to reform a former negligence. And for the people of God in various parts of the world, visibly, and by express agreement, to unite for this extraordinary prayer, is no more than their duty; and no more than what it is foretold the people of God should actually do, before the time comes of the church's promised glory on earth. And if this be a duty, then it is a duty to come into

some method to render this practicable: but it is not practicable (as was shown before) but by this method, or some other equivalent.

And as to this particular method, proposed to promote union in extraordinary prayer—God's people in various parts setting apart fixed seasons, to return at certain periods, wherein they agree to offer up their prayers at the same time—it is not so new as some may possibly imagine. This may appear by what follows; which is a part of a paper, dispersed abroad in Great Britain and Ireland, from London, in the year 1712, being the latter end of Queen Anne's reign, and very extensively complied with, entitled, "A serious call from the city to the country, to join with them in setting apart some time, viz. from seven to eight, every Tuesday morning, for the solemn seeking of God, each one in his closet, now in this so critical a juncture.

> **Jonah 1:6**. Call upon God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

What follows is an extract from it:

> "You have formerly been called upon to the like duty and have complied with it; and that not without success. It is now thought highly seasonable to renew the call. It is hoped that you will not be more backward, when it is so apparent that there is even greater need. It is scarce imaginable how a professing people should stand in greater need of prayer, than we do at this day. You were formerly bespoke from that very pertinent text,
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> > **Zechariah 8:21**. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord,
>
> or, as the marginal reading, more expressive of the original reading, is, "continually, from day to day, to entreat the face of the Lord."

According to this excellent pattern, we of this city, the metropolis of our land, think ourselves obliged to call upon our brethren in Great Britain and Ireland, at a time when our hearts cannot but meditate terror, and our flesh tremble for fear of God, and are afraid of his righteous judgments: those past being for the most part forgotten; and the signs of the times foreboding evil to come, being by the generality little, if at all, regarded: we cannot therefore but renew our earnest request, that all who make conscience of praying for the peace of Jerusalem, who wish well to Zion, who would have us and our posterity a nation of British protestants, and not of popish bigots and French slaves, would give us (as far as real and not pretended necessity will give leave) a meeting at the throne of grace, at the hour mentioned; there to wrestle with God, for turning away his anger from us, for our deliverance from the hands of his and our enemies, for turning the councils of all Ahitophels, at home and abroad, into foolishness; for mercy to the queen and kingdom; for a happy peace, or successful war so long as the matter shall continue undetermined; for securing the protestant succession in the illustrious house of Hanover, (by good and evil wishes to which, the friends and enemies of our religion and civil rights are so essentially distinguished,) and especially for the influences of divine grace upon the rising generation, particularly the seed of the righteous, that the offspring of our Christian heroes may never be the plague of our church and country. And we desire that this solemn prayer be begun the first Tuesday after sight, and continued at least the summer of this present year, 1712. And we think every modest, reasonable, and just request, such as this, should not on any account be denied us; since we are not laying a burden on others, to which we will not most willingly put our own shoulders; nay, indeed, count it much more a blessing than a burden. We hope this will not be esteemed by serious protestants, of any denomination, a needless step; much less do we fear being

censured by any such, as fanciful and melancholy, on account of such a proposal. We with them believe a providence, know and acknowledge that our God is a God hearing prayer. Scripture recordeth, and our age is not barren of instances, of God's working marvellous deliverances for his people in answer to humble, believing, and importunate prayer; especially when prayer and reformation go together; which is what we desire. Let this counsel be acceptable to us, in this day of the church's calamity, and our common fears. Let us seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Let us go and pray unto our God, and he will hearken unto us. We shall seek him and find him, when we search for him with all our hearts. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love her. And may Zion's friends and enemies both cry out with wonder, when they see the work of God; Behold they pray! What hath God wrought! Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Postscript. It is desired and hoped, that if any are hindered from attending this work at the above-mentioned hour, they will nevertheless set apart an hour weekly for it."

God speedily and wonderfully heard and answered those who were united in that extraordinary prayer, in suddenly scattering those black clouds which threatened the nation and the protestant interest with ruin, at that time; in bringing about, in so remarkable a manner, that happy change in the state of affairs in the nation, which was after the queen's death, by bringing in King George the First, just at the time when the enemies of the religion and liberties of the nation had ripened their designs to be put in speedy execution. And we see in the beginning of this extract, that what is proposed, is mentioned as being no new thing, but that God's people in Great Britain

had formerly been called upon to the like duty, and had complied, not without success. Such agreements have several times been proposed in Scotland, before this which is now proposed to us; there was a proposal published for this very practice, in the year 1732, and another in 1735. So that it appears this objection of novelty is built on a mistake.

SECT. VI
Concluding Considerations

Global call for united prayer • Action for Zion's favor urged • Ministers worldwide unite in prayer for religious revival and kingdom advancement • Interdenominational appeal • Commitment to seven-year prayer for spiritual renewal urged

Now, upon the whole, I desire every serious Christian who may read this discourse, calmly and deliberately to consider, whether he can excuse himself from complying with what has been proposed to us, and requested of us, by those ministers of Christ in Scotland, who are the authors of the late Memorial. God has stirred up a part of his church, in a distant part of the world, to be in an extraordinary manner seeking and crying to him, that he would appear to favour Zion, as he has promised. And they are applying themselves to us, to join with them; and make that very proposal to us, which is spoken of in my text, and in like manner and circumstances. The members of one church, in one country, are coming to others in distant countries, saying,

> **Zechariah 8:21** Let us go speedily and constantly to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts.

Will it not become us readily to say, I will go also? What these servants of Christ ask of us, is not silver or gold, or any of our outward substance, or that we would put ourselves to any cost, or do anything that will be likely to expose us to any remarkable trouble, difficulty, or suffering in our outward interest; but only that we would help

together with them, by our prayers to God, for the greatest mercy in the world; a mercy which as much concerns us as them; for the glory of their Lord and ours; for the great advancement of our common interest and happiness, and the happiness of our fellow-creatures, through all nations; a mercy, of which, at this day especially, there is great need; a mercy, which we, in this land, do stand in particular need of; a mercy, which the word of God requires us to make the subject matter of our prayers above all other mercies, and gives us more encouragement to pray earnestly and unitedly to him for, than any other mercy; and a mercy, which the providence of God towards the world of mankind, at this day, loudly calls the people of God to pray for. I think, we cannot reasonably doubt but that these ministers have acted a part becoming disciples of the great Messiah, and ministers of his kingdom; and have done the will of God, according to his word, in setting forward such an affair at this day, and in proposing it to us. And therefore, I desire it may be considered, whether we shall not really sin against God, in refusing to comply with their proposal and request, or in neglecting it, and turning it by, with but little notice and attention; therein disregarding that which is truly a call of God to us.

The ministers that make this proposal to us, are no separatists or schismatics; are no promoters of public disorders, nor of any wildness or extravagance in matters of religion; but are quiet, peaceable members and ministers of the church of Scotland, who have lamented the late divisions and breaches of that church. If any shall say, they cannot judge of their character, but must take it on trust from others, because they conceal their names; in answer to this, I would say, That I presume no sober person will say that he has any reason to suspect them to be any other than gentlemen of honest intention. Be assured, there is no appearance of anything else but an upright design in their proposal; and that they have not mentioned their names, is an argument of it. It may well be presumed, from the manner of their expressing themselves in the Memorial itself, they concealed their names from what perhaps may

be called an excess of modesty; choosing to be at the greatest distance from appearing to set forth themselves to the view of the world, as the heads of a great affair, and the first projectors and movers of something extraordinary. And therefore, they are careful to tell us, that they do not propose the affair, but as a thing already set on foot; and do not tell us who first projected it. The proposal is made to us in a very proper and prudent manner, with all appearance of Christian modesty and sincerity, and with a very prudent guard against anything that looks like superstition, or whatsoever might entangle a tender conscience. Far from any appearance of design to promote a particular party, or denomination of Christians, in opposition to others, with all appearance of the contrary, it is their charitable request, that none would by any means conceive of any such thing to be in their view, and that all—of every denomination and opinion concerning the late religious commotions—would join with them in seeking the common interest of the kingdom of Christ. And therefore, I think, none can be in the way of their duty in neglecting a proposal in itself excellent, and which they have reason to think is made with upright intentions, merely because the proposers modestly conceal their names. I do not see how any serious person, who has even an ill opinion of late religious stirs, can have any colour of reason to refuse a compliance with this proposal, on that account. The more disorders, extravagancies, and delusions of the devil have lately prevailed, the more need have we to pray earnestly to God, for his Holy Spirit, to promote true religion, in opposition to the grand deceiver, and all his works. And the more such prayer as is proposed, is answered, the more effectually will all that is contrary to sober and pure religion be extirpated and exploded.

One would think that each who favours the dust of Zion, when he hears that God is stirring up a considerable number of his ministers and people to unite in extraordinary prayer, for the revival of religion and the advancement of his kingdom, should greatly rejoice on this occasion. If we lay to heart the present calamities of the church of

Christ, and long for that blessed alteration which God has promised, one would think it should be natural to rejoice at the appearance of something in so dark a day, which is so promising a token. Would not our friends that were lately in captivity in Canada, who earnestly longed for deliverance, have rejoiced to have heard of anything that seemed to forebode the approach of their redemption? And particularly, may we not suppose such of them as were religious persons, would greatly have rejoiced to have understood that there was stirred up in God's people an extraordinary spirit of prayer for their redemption? I do not know why it would not be as natural for us to rejoice at the like hopeful token of the redemption of Zion, if we made her interest our own, and preferred Jerusalem above our chief joy.

If we are indeed called of God to comply with the proposal now made to us, then let me beseech all who sincerely love the interest of real Christianity, notwithstanding any diversity of opinion and former disputes, now to unite, in this affair, with one heart and voice: and let us go speedily to pray before the Lord. There is no need that one should wait for another. If we can get others our neighbours to join with us, and so can conveniently spend the quarterly seasons with praying societies, this is desirable; but if not, why should we wholly neglect the duty proposed? Why should not we perform it by ourselves, uniting in heart and practice, as far as we are able, with those who in distant places are engaged in that duty at that time?

If it be agreeable to the mind and will of God, that we should comply with the Memorial, by praying for the coming of Christ's kingdom, in the manner therein proposed, then doubtless it is the duty of all to comply in that respect also, viz. in endeavouring, as far as in us lies, to promote others joining in such prayer, and to render this union and agreement as extensive as may be. Private Christians may have many advantages and opportunities for this; but especially ministers, inasmuch as they not only are by office overseers of whole congregations of God's people, and their

guides in matters of religion, but ordinarily have a far more extensive acquaintance and influence abroad, than private Christians in common have.

And I hope that such as are convinced it is their duty to comply with and encourage this design, will remember we ought not only to go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek his mercy, but also to go constantly. We should unite in our practice these two things, which our Saviour unites in his precept, PRAYING and NOT FAINTING. If we should continue some years, and nothing remarkable in providence should appear as though God heard and answered, we should act very unbecoming believers, if we should therefore begin to be disheartened, and grow dull and slack in seeking of God so great a mercy. It is very apparent from the word of God, that he is wont often to try the faith and patience of his people, when crying to him for some great and important mercy, by withholding the mercy sought, for a season; and not only so, but at first to cause an increase of dark appearances. And yet he, without fail, at last succeeds those who continue instant in prayer with all perseverance, and "will not let him go except he blesses." It is now proposed that this extraordinary, united prayer should continue for seven years, from November 1746. Perhaps some who appear forward to engage, may begin to think the time long, before the seven years are out; and may account it a dull story, to go on for so long time, praying in this extraordinary method, while all yet continues dark without any dawning of the wished-for light, or appearance in providence of the near approach of the desired mercy. But let it be considered, whether it will not be a poor business, if our faith and patience is so short-winded, that we cannot be willing to wait upon God for seven years, in a way of taking this little pains, in seeking a mercy so infinitely vast. For my part, I sincerely wish and hope, that there may not be an end of extraordinary united prayer, among God's people, for the effusions of the blessed Spirit, when the seven years are ended; but that it will be continued, either in this method, or some other, by a new agreement, that will be entered into with greater engagedness, and

more abundant alacrity, than this is; and that extraordinary united prayer for such a mercy will be further propagated and extended, than it can be expected to be in seven years. But, at the same time, I hope God's people, who unite in this agreement, will see some tokens for good before these seven years are out, that shall give them to see, God has not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain; and shall serve greatly to animate and encourage them to go on in united prayers for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, with increasing fervency. But whatever our hopes may be in this respect, we must be content to be ignorant of the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his power; and must be willing that God should answer prayer, and fulfil his own glorious promises, in his own time; remembering such instructions, counsels, and promises, of the word of God as these,

> **Psalm 27:14** Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.
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> **Habakkuk 2:3** For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but in the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.
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> **Micah 7:7** I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.
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> **Isaiah 25:8-9** God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God! we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is JEHOVAH! we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. [Amen.]

FINIS.